Keep The Gate

Rev. Joseph J. Williams, S.J.

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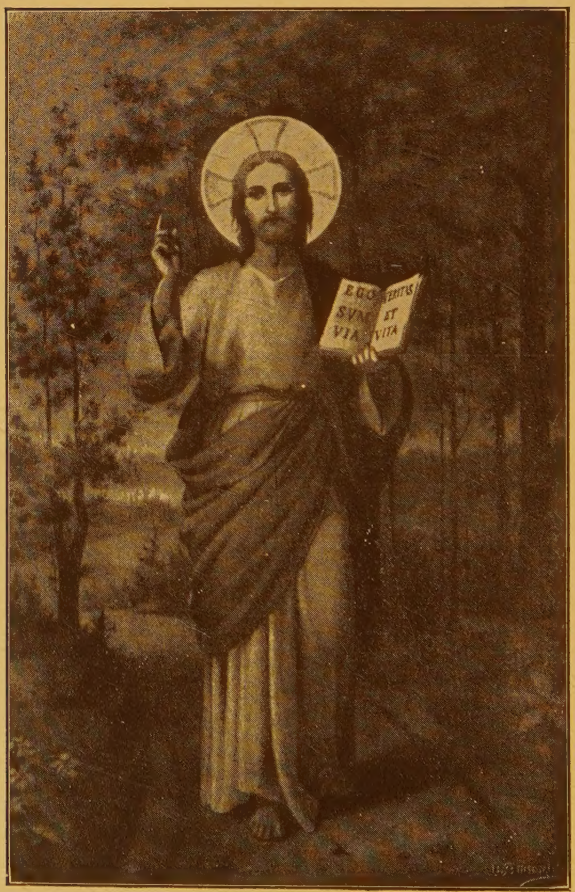


"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."—St. John xiv : 6.

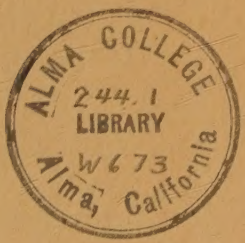
KEEP THE GATE

GUARDING THE SOUL AGAINST SIN

BY

REV. JOSEPH J. WILLIAMS, S.J.

"Stand in the gate of the house of the Lord."
(Jerem. vii, 2)



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✠PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.
Archbishop of New York.

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PREFACE

Value of a Human Soul

A YEAR or two after my ordination, I was sent for by an aged priest, who seemed at the point of death. He was a man grown old in the Master's service. For nearly fifty years had he stood at God's holy altar, his ministry had been far and wide, while the best years of his life had been devoted to retreats and to mission work. It was, therefore, with a feeling of reverential awe that I answered the summons.

I found the old man emaciated and worn out. He was not suffering much physically, but was praying for the hour of his release from the trammels of earth. When he saw me standing at his side, he gathered together his remaining strength. A little of the old-time fire lit up his eye, and a nervous energy took possession of his wasted frame. He struggled into a sitting position, and then, with a touch of his former vigor, he cried aloud, "Oh, the value of a human soul! I am about to appear before my Maker, and my one reproach is, that I have not made sufficient use of that great thought. You, you," he cried, "are still in the vigor of youth.

Go forth. Make it your life-work. Teach men the value of a human soul. Lead them up Calvary's heights. Show them the Saviour fastened to the hard wood of the cross, His arms extended, His head crowned with thorns, and teach them the value of a human soul. Show them the nail-pierced hands and feet, and teach them the value of a human soul. Promise me, promise me," he pleaded, "that you will repair my own neglect, and then I can die in peace. Take up the work, not in any ordinary way, but especially devoting your life to it. Teach them the value of a human soul. Teach them devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is all the same. Teach them frequent communion. That is its realization." He sank back exhausted. The quivering, pleading voice faded away. Yet, as I knelt beside him and made the promise for which he craved, like an echo from beyond the grave, again I caught the words, "Teach them the value of a human soul."

And so, armed with the commission of that aged priest, and, as I trust, in the spirit of his zealous, generous heart, it has since been my purpose to teach men the value of a human soul, a soul which was appraised by God Himself at infinite price, the last drop of the precious blood shed by the Divine Son on Calvary.

This, too, is the fundamental purpose of the Spiritual Exercises, to teach man the value of his immortal soul. In the Foundation, the intrinsic purpose and value of the soul is set forth.

During the First Week, the exercitant has brought home to him the paltry valuation he himself has set upon that soul, and the dreadful consequences of this depreciation. In the course of the Second and Third Weeks, following the steps of the God-Man in His quest of souls, and especially in the midst of the sorrows and shame of the passion, the exercitant arrives at an appreciation of Christ's valuation of the soul. Finally, amid the glories of the Resurrection, he strengthens his new-found purpose to conform his new valuation of the soul with the norm and standard of the Risen Christ.

Our Divine Saviour spoke in parables, and the Gospel page is rich in illustrations. Example is contagious, whether for good or evil. The judicious use of story and anecdote may greatly aid the exercitant in the course of his retreat, while he is learning to value aright his immortal soul, not merely by the awakening and the holding of his interest, but by the bringing home to him of the great principle that changed the course of St. Ignatius' life, "If others could do this, why not I?"

The human intellect depends very largely on the external senses, and for this reason the action of grace in its enlightenment of the intellect and its strengthening of the will, may be seconded by timely illustrations, for illustrations have a subtle power to touch the human heart, and, by awakening tender emotions of

love, to break down the barriers of carnal resistance. The purpose of these pages, then, is to contribute in some degree to the success of the Spiritual Exercises, in their God-given work of teaching men the value of a human soul.

Reading, especially at table, should supplement formal meditation, not supplant it. By presenting anecdotes and passages of Holy Scripture in keeping with the Exercise under consideration, new food for reflection will be presented, without diverting the mind from the actual stage of the retreat. Applications will as a rule be merely indicated. For, while this treatise might serve as a handbook for a private retreat, its primary object is to provide matter for reading at meals, when the Exercises are given to a number of exercitants.

The direct purpose of the present volume is further restricted to week-end retreats and such Exercises as fall within the scope of the First Week. Those who are engaged in the Purgative Way stand in greater need of external helps than those who have further advanced in the school of the Exercises.

May the spirit of the dying priest accompany this humble effort to teach men the value of a human soul.

* * *

PREFACE

Prayer

Rouse up, O Lord, and foster the spirit of the Exercises which Blessed Ignatius labored to spread abroad, that we, being possessed by that same spirit, may be zealous to love what he loved and to do what he taught! Through Christ our Lord.[1]

1 Prayer of Fr. Diertins, S.J.

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INTRODUCTION

Keeping the Gate

Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it. (Ps. CXXVI, 1.)

AN EYE-WITNESS of the awful scenes of of havoc wrought by the Jamaican earthquake of 1907 tells us a simple yet touching story of boyish heroism that brightened the days of gloom and horror that followed on the great catastrophe.[1] In the city of Kingston alone, in the space of half a minute, 1,000 souls were hurled into eternity without an instant to make their peace with God, and scarcely a building was left undamaged in the entire city.

A puny lad of fourteen, Alan by name, had been porter in the residence of the missionaries. Refusing to desert the Fathers in the hour of danger, child though he was, he begged to be allowed to make some return for the kindness they had shown him. And so he was set to stand guard at a little gateway that led to the temporary headquarters of the priests, an open yard in the midst of the ruins.

1 Faithful Alan, Messenger of the Sacred Heart, Dec., 1908, p. 681.

All through the overpowering heat of the day, unprotected from the insidious rays of the tropical sun, the child stood at his post, and during the silent watches of the night he curled himself up beneath a carriage close by the gate, still faithful to his trust.

Many a cruel cuff and still more cruel blow from riotous beggars did the child endure, until one day, scarcely two weeks after the great disaster, a mob of vagrants gathered at the gate, determined to force an entrance, while the Fathers were absent, engaged on their missions of mercy through the city. Their purpose was to steal whatever food there was within. Alan was alone. There was no time to summon help. And even if there had been, it was to Alan that the keeping of the gate had been entrusted, and Alan was faithful to that trust.

Bravely the lad went forth, closed the gate behind him, and then stood there, his frail body a living barrier against the mob. They ordered him to stand aside. He would not move. They threatened, and though his young heart must have beat wild with fear, with his little hands he clutched the gate, only waiting for the end. Not to be gainsaid by so delicate a child, the mob made one mad rush to batter in the gate, and so they struck down and trampled on the boy.

When the cowards saw the little fellow sink beneath their blows, appalled at their own

work, they slunk away, leaving the gate still safe in the possession of the dying child. Tender hands bore the bruised little form within the yard, but it was too late. The mob had done its work. After two days of intense agony, consumed with fever, yet conscious to the last, without complaint the little martyr of obedience passed to his reward, only happy to die in serving the Fathers who had been kind to him.

When the cares of life bear heavily upon us, when the body is weary, and even the soul craves for a little rest, we may draw new strength from the memory of Faithful Alan in far-away Jamaica. His frail body has long since become the food for worms, but his heroic little soul in heaven, with the band of martyrs, is singing the praises of the Queen of Martyrs, and only waiting for the glad day, when it may hasten back to earth, to gather up the handful of dust that once constituted its fragile dwelling, that as that sickly body was the companion in the weary watches at the gate, so for all eternity it may share in the glories of the resurrection.

When God called forth the human race from out its nothingness, He set mankind to guard a gate, the gate that is to lead to heaven's eternal joys. But man proved faithless to his trust, and falling a ready victim to Satan's wiles, betrayed the post entrusted to his keeping. The gate was lost. But no, a little Child, frail crea-

ture and omnipotent God in one, ever obedient to His Father's wish, hastened to place Himself before the gate, a ready victim to preserve the trust.

And so it was, on that first Christmas night, when the fulness of time had been accomplished, on Bethlehem's Hill a Babe appeared, on whom alone the safety of the eternal gate must rest. Not for two weeks was that child called upon to bear the cuffs and blows of riotous beggars; for three and thirty years He was to undergo all the outrages that the arch-enemy of mankind could devise against Him. The cold and suffering and cruel want which marked His birth was but a prelude to the boyhood days of toil and to the ripening manhood subjected to open persecution, that was to culminate only on Calvary's Hill of shame and dereliction.

Why was this? A single act of submission on the part of Bethlehem's Babe would have been an ample satisfaction for Adam's disobedience. The gate could have been secured at the first instant of the Virginal Conception, when the Son's obedience to the Father might have repaired the outraged majesty of the Godhead, had not the eternal choice decreed, that man's redemption should be accomplished on Golgotha alone. All this is true. But we must further remember that Christ came for another and abiding mission, to give to us, His loved ones, an example, to lighten the burden of our sor-

rows, to raise our drooping spirits, to heal the wounds of heart and soul, torn bleeding wounds that sap away our strength.

Not only to the father of mankind, but to each and every man has God entrusted the keeping of a gate, the gateway of an immortal soul. To each and every one of us has it been said by God Himself, "Keep thou the gate, and let no vagrant beggar pass. Keep thou the gate. Keep it during the days of all-consuming sorrow. Keep it during the nights of deepest desolation. Keep thou the gate, and though sin and the demons rage as an angry mob without, still guard that gateway even at the cost of life itself."

The reader in passing might imagine that little Alan in Jamaica was a child of guileless innocence, a child watched over by a mother's loving care, a chosen soul unstained by any blemish of sin. But God in His providence, the better to encourage us in our weakness, permitted otherwise. Before he came to the Missionaries, he had been expelled from school as a bad boy. He was not in reality a bad boy in the strict sense of the word. He was a wild boy, a wayward boy. There was much of wrong in that boy's life, but within was a generous heart responsive to kindness and grace. And from the hour he came to work for the Fathers, he strove to begin his life anew. He had his falls. He had his failures. But day by day he struggled on, and long before he died the little hero

at the gate, he had learned to guard his soul from sin.

Where did Alan find the strength to mend his ways? How did he merit the grace to turn away from sin? The secret of that boy's life is quickly told. The morning after the earthquake, out from the ruins of the residence was drawn a little table. The vestments were recovered, and everything else that was necessary for the Mass. Each morning the Holy Sacrifice was offered in the open yard under a spreading pontiana tree. Little Alan would come up from the gate, dragging along his weary, aching limbs, sink down before the improvised altar, and strengthened by his Eucharistic Master, drag himself back to his post for another day of toil and suffering. It was in holy communion that Alan learned to *Keep the Gate*. And when the child's pure soul was about to wing its happy flight to God, a smile lit up the wasted countenance, the puny hands were clasped upon the heaving breast, guarding a sacred treasure, to bear it to eternity. The Companion of his watches dwelt within. Yes, the little fellow had found his courage, his fidelity to duty, in receiving his Eucharistic Lord, and as he kept those weary watches at the gate, he had not watched alone. Our Lord watched in him. Our Lord watched for him. And even in his death, together they kept watch and ward over the priceless gateway of his immortal soul.

No matter what the blemish of our past life may be, no matter how countless the wanderings from grace and thoughtless betrayals of the gateway entrusted to our keeping, here in our retreat we are to make our peace with God, begin anew our wasted life, and by taking Christ Himself as the Companion of our Watches, learn at last to *Keep the Gate*. "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." Here is the secret of our failure in the past. Our pride has made us seek to *Keep the Gate* alone.

In 1831, sachems of the Algonquins and Iroquois sent gifts to the Holy Father with this message: "Thou art the Shepherd of all the faithful; thou hast taught us to know Jesus Christ; thou didst send us men of the black robe, saying to them, Go, seek the Indians; they are my children, help and assist them. Thou art our Father, and we will never acknowledge any other. Should our descendants forget thee and lapse into error, show them these gifts, and they will return to thee." [2]

On the Heights of Calvary knelt the weeping Mother, offering to the Heavenly Father the sacrifice of the Divine Son, as a pledge of the fidelity of the children of her sorrows to the end of time. In her person, we pledged that day our undying faith and service. In the hour of holy Baptism, the promise was renewed by our god-parents in our behalf. With the dawn

2 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. III, no. 423.

of reason we ourselves assumed this bounden duty, and in our first holy communion we sealed the pledge anew. Yet with the course of time, perhaps the solemn obligation has been forgotten. During the days of this retreat, each morning on the altar the Holy Sacrifice will be renewed. The Heavenly Father, gazing down into each individual soul, will call attention to this gift, and once again remind us of the Mother's offering on Calvary, and thus with tender whisperings of grace will He recall us from our wanderings.

"And he said to them: Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little. For there were many coming and going: and they had not so much as time to eat." [8] It was in the Spring of the year 32, the Spring before His passion, that our Divine Saviour waited at Capharnaum by the Sea of Galilee for the return of His Apostles from their first mission. In the preceding December, He had sent them forth, two and two, to preach the kingdom of God, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out devils—all in His name. And as the Gospel story tells us, they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

As Spring approached, the enthusiastic apostles returned to Capharnaum, according to instructions, to give an account of their mission. Those had been happy months. Months

[8] Mark vi, 31.

of labor, it is true. Yes, even of hardship at times, with open persecution on the part of Scribe and Pharisee. For they spoke in the Master's name, and in His name, too, wrought innumerable miracles. But they were no less months of glorious conquests over demons, of soul-stirring cures transcending the power of nature and science. And they returned to the Master with their countless stories of wonders wrought, conversions effected, the spreading of the light of the Kingdom and all this meant to souls heretofore darkened by doubt and sin.

Of all the Twelve, Judas must have been one of the most exuberant in his profession of love and devotion to the Master in the hour on the return. His voice, perhaps, was raised louder than the rest, protesting that even the demons were obedient to his command when he but spoke in the Master's name. May we not imagine him pleading with the Master, to be permitted to return with even increased power to the mission of love and mercy, to make known the Messias and His Kingdom, and to give proof of it in prodigies beyond the power of simple man? Incidentally, of course, there must have been the lurking hope of thus gaining new glory for himself.

Some scene, such as this, may have been interrupted, when our Divine Saviour turned to His apostles and bade them to enter into a small boat and "Come apart into a desert place and rest a little." There must have been many

a murmur of surprise on more than one apostle's lips. Come apart into a desert place? What of the great work that they had interrupted? What of the Kingdom of Heaven that they were to preach? Rest a little? What need had they of rest? They were not weary. In the old days, toiling after the Master, companions of His wanderings, many a time had they been footsore and weary, and the Master had not bade them rest, but rather come and pray. Now, they were not weary. They were only too anxious to go back, and take up again the labors that they had relinquished to report to the Master as He had bidden them. But the Master said, "Come," and the Master's voice might not pass unheeded, as it was only in His name that all their wonders had been accomplished.

We may well imagine that Judas alone hangs back in sulky silence. It is perhaps only when he sees the other disciples with the Master about to put off from the shore, that he takes his place in the little craft. Half-stifled complaints are on his lips. Anger and deep resentment are rankling in his selfish heart.

Supposing this to be the disposition of the Iscariot, we may follow him in spirit. He is not ready for his retreat "in the desert place." His heart is hardened against the Director of the retreat, the Divine Master Himself. The great truths enunciated and the sublime utterances of this Director fall on his soul as seed on

rocky, sun-baked soil. The other apostles are drawing spiritual strength from the retreat for their future ministry. Judas, as the Israelites of old, is sighing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and is occupying his thoughts with past achievements and future plans. The desert is no longer a deserted place for him. He has peopled it with creations of his imagination. Peter and the rest are learning unselfishly to *Keep the Gate,* strengthened and fortified by the Master's precept and example, and trusting in the assurance that He will share the watch with them. Judas is pining for the flattery and praise that would be his, if engaged again upon his mission of miracles. He hears indifferently the Master's words. The plaudits of the multitudes still ring in his ears. Oh, yes, he'll *Keep the Gate.* He'll save his soul. Wasn't that the reason why he gave up all and followed the Master? He must externally follow the exercises of this retreat, but his heart is far away. He thus deludes himself. Had Judas made an honest effort to reform the weakness of his character, had he generously cast himself into each and every exercise of the retreat, had he manfully striven to take the Master as the companion of his watches, he might not later have betrayed the gate, and died, a deicide, at his own hands.

Napoleon from Mount Cœur-de-Lion pointed to the town of Saint Jean d'Arere, and told his staff, that the capture of that town would de-

cide his destiny, and change the face of Europe. The success of the retreat will change the course of one's life, and go far toward determining one's destiny for eternity. In the desert, Judas held his destiny in his own hands, and we no less, to-day, by this retreat may shape our hereafter, and change the course of the countless lives interwoven by daily contact with our own. There is perhaps some weakness of character to be overcome, or preëminence in some virtue to be attained. It may be the adoption of a pious practice, or the imposing of self-restraint, that will prove our Saint Jean d'Arere. In the case of each one of us, some particular virtue will assuredly dominate the course of life's battle. If we can only make that virtue our own, victory is assured. With Alan, it was devotion to the Missionaries, strengthened by the Eucharist, that made of the little outcast a martyr of obedience. With Judas, it would have been unselfish devotion to the Master and greater confidence and love, that would have saved the apostle, by conquering a disposition that rather sought creature comforts, and preferred the plaudits of the multitude to companionship with Christ in obscurity.

Our Saint Jean d'Arere must be determined by each one of us during this time of retreat. Are we with Judas too prone to seek our consolation in creature comforts? In the hour of temptation or trial, do we naturally turn to the

tabernacle, or rather seek to bolster up our drooping spirits by the flattery of friends or the enjoyment of pleasures?

St. Francis de Sales compares the heart of man to a clock, which will not mark the hour, unless it be wound up, cleaned and oiled at regular intervals.[4] Whatever the zeal and generosity of former retreats, such is the weakness of poor human nature, that the spirit no longer rings true and clear, unless from time to time it is renewed in fervor and strength by the exercises of prayer and meditation, unless it is cleansed not only from sin and serious defects, but also from the little flecks of dust that filter in through the trifling crevices of the imperfections of life, and finally, unless it is oiled and rendered smooth by generous self-sacrifice and the practice of penance, both external and internal.

In another place, St. Francis de Sales says: "Recall yourselves sometimes to the interior solitude of your heart; removed from all creatures, treat of the affairs of your salvation and perfection with God, as a friend would speak heart to heart with another." Here is a model of your retreat. Come apart into a desert place. Recall yourself to the interior solitude of your heart, removed from creatures, and rest a little, while the Master treats with you of the affairs of your salvation and perfection. Talk with Him, heart to heart, as a friend to the one and

4 Scaramelli, Dir. Ascet. II, p. 412.

only true friend who would *Keep the Gate* with you. "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it."

There is in the Southern Seas a flying fish. Its gauzelike pectoral fins, as wings, sustain its flight, until the thin film of water adhering to them evaporates, when it falls back into the sea, unless it clips the crest of a passing wave, renews the film of water on the pectorals, and thus glides further in its flight. Whatever the generous aspirations of the soul, such is the tendency downward, that only the renewal and increase of grace enables us to rise again in flight above our material surroundings. This requires whole-hearted coöperation on our part. The retreat is a thing of our own doing, our own making. The director, as his name implies, but points the way, and directs the energy of our effort. On our part, solitude, as we saw in the case of Judas, avails nothing without interior and exterior recollection. We further require for the success of our retreat self-exertion, manifested especially in fidelity to every little requirement and detail for the perfection of each exercise, and great generosity in cooperating with the whisperings of grace.

All this, you may exclaim, needs sanctity, and sanctity is beyond my feeble effort. Was it beyond the effort of that little colored boy in distant Jamaica? For Alan was a colored boy. Would you be put to shame by this little outcast of the schools, this child of nature? Are

you prepared to hang your head in confusion on that great day of final triumph in the Valley of Josaphat, when Alan in the flesh is to meet again the Missionaries for whom he died? Can you not even now in fancy see the little fellow running toward his loved Fathers, greeting the first he meets with the glad cry of boyish triumph: "Father, I *Kept the Gate.*"

Oh, in that hour, may each one of us be able to turn our eyes to that loving Master, for whom we have not died, but who in truth has renewed each day upon our altars the Sacrifice of Calvary, that He might be the Companion of our watches, and help us *Keep the Gate;* and may we, beholding the look of love divine He casts upon His chosen ones, take up the little fellow's cry and say, "Yes, O Lord, we too have *Kept the Gate,* the gateway of our soul from sin. Many a time we betrayed the sacred trust Thou hadst confided to us. Full often we were faithless to our duty. Frequently we gave admission to the ugly beggars of sin and infidelity. But, from the hour that the example of Faithful Alan was brought home to us, we began life anew. Encouraged by his example, and strengthened by Thy grace which was so bounteously bestowed upon us in that retreat, which marked the dawning of a new life, we struggled on day by day, ever learning to depend more and more on Thee, the true Companion of our watches. Yes, O Lord, the gate is safe. For Thou hast *Kept the Gate* with us."

PRAYER

Stretch forth to Thy faithful, O Lord, the right hand of Thy heavenly aid, that they may seek Thee with all their hearts, and may be worthy to obtain what they ask.[5]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 53
" I, " 25
" II, " 5
" I, " 2
" III, " 1
" III, " 2

5 Prayer over the People; Mass, Saturday after 3rd Sunday of Lent.

KEEP THE GATE

CHAPTER I

The Temple Sanctified

The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob. (Ps. LXXXVI, 2.)

WHEN Solomon crowned Mount Moria with a temple of unsurpassed splendor, he built therein an inner sanctuary reserved solely for the God of Israel.[1] Even the entrance to the Holy of Holies was shielded from the profane gaze of men by a veil,[2] which none but the high-priest might pass, and he only once a year, when on the day of Atonement, in the performance of the duties of his office, he sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering and offered incense.[3]

After drawing out of nothingness all the beauties of nature, after clothing the earth itself with verdure, and raising up animal life in its various forms, the Divine Architect perfected His handiwork, by finding the means of having all creation redound to His external glory, through an intelligent being capable of

1 3 Kings VI, 16. 2 2 Paral. III, 14. 3 Levit. XVI.

referring all good back to its source. In forming man, then, as the living temple of the Holy Ghost, He, too, constructed an inner sanctuary, the soul, which He has reserved for Himself, and for Himself alone.

The Jewish Temple was prepared for the Presence of the Most High at the cost of untold sacrifice and generosity on the part of the entire nation.[4] Eighty thousand men were engaged in shaping great masses of marble hewn out of the rough mountainside, and seventy thousand others were devoted to the transporting of the finished blocks. Another thirty thousand, in relays of ten thousand each, were stripping Libanus of her cedars and bringing them to the site of the future temple. For seven long years they labored, before the work approached completion,[5] and then, all the people of Israel offered their treasured gold for the adornment of the House of God. On the day of the solemn dedication, Holy Scripture tells us, there were sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered.[6]

Not by a nation's generosity is the sanctuary in man made ready for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; not by years of labor, and offering of treasured hoard; but, by a God-Man's sacrifice of self. For three and thirty years did Christ suffer and toil, that on Mount Calvary He might shed the last drop of His most precious blood, making of Himself a ready victim

[4] 3 Kings, v, 13-18. [5] 3 Kings vi, 37, 38. [6] 3 Kings, viii, 5.

self-offered in holocaust to sanctify His temples.

At the moment of the dawn of reason, each one of us was set to guard and keep one of these temples of the Most High. With the first realization of right and wrong, we were constituted a priesthood, to devote each one his life to the service and beautifying of the sanctuary entrusted to his keeping. The daily task to *Keep the Gate* is but the fulfilment of the bounden duty we owe to God Himself, who has placed us as wardens over His chosen temples.

We know from the first page of our catechism that man was created to know, love and serve God, and by so doing to save his soul. But, do we stop to realize what these words really mean? Do we ever reflect that we are merely guardians of a temple, and that the day will come, when we must inevitably be called to account for our guardianship? Has the fact ever been brought home to us, that we are here in life expressly for a purpose, and that despite the achievements we may accomplish in the eyes of men, we must be adjudged eternal failures, unless we are faithful to the design of our Maker, who has set us wardens, guarding the temple of an immortal soul?

In God's Temple on the Holy Mount, the sacrificial fire was always kept burning.[7] At the prescribed hours, the incense-offering was made, and hymn and prayer followed the daily

[7] Levit. VI, 12.

routine.[8] Beyond these duties of the Temple, the priest had ever to bear in mind the exalted dignity of his office. Even physical uncleanliness debarred him from the performance of his functions.[9] Hours of relaxation were allowed him, but he had always to remember his priestly dignity.

We too have our duties to fulfil, our obligations to satisfy. It is but the beginning, to preserve our temples orderly and free from sin. It is not sufficient to sacrifice illicit pleasure, to offer up the incense of a contrite heart, to sound God's praises in our morning and evening prayers. Over and above all this, even in the hour of relaxation, if we would be faithful to the dignity of our calling as guardians of this temple of the Holy Ghost, we must ever keep before us, that the only thing on earth that is worth our while is the service of our Maker, in the preservation and beautifying of the indestructible temple committed to our care by God Himself.

What are strength of body, beauty of form, intellectual accomplishments but settings and adornments for the sanctuary of the soul? Of what avail are wealth and distinction, power and influence, the esteem and deference of our fellow men, unless they serve to beautify the approaches to the temple and perfect its service? It is to this end that health and vigor of

8 1 Paral. xxiii, 30. 9 Levit. xxi, 17-21.

mind and body, no less than the goods and riches of earth are given. We were not made for them, nor merely for their enjoyment. They were made for us. They were given to us by an all-bountiful God, to help us to greater fidelity in the service entrusted to our care. It behooves us, then, to use these gifts of God according to the purpose of the Giver. Sacrifice is essential to religion. Void and cold is the temple without its holocaust. In the temple of my soul, on the altar of duty, must daily be sacrificed my likes and dislikes, my preferences in the use I would make of creature comfort. My one and only rule must be: Will it help me in the service of my God? Will it help me to *Keep the Gate?*

Above all the tabernacles of Jacob, God loved Sion, precisely because it was to be the site of His chosen city, the city of His Temple, wherein He was to manifest His Presence in a special way. God loves the soul of man above all material creation, because it bears His image, and is the living temple of the Holy Ghost. Consequently, what must be His love for the faithful warden who *Keeps the Gate* and preserves the temple undefiled?

In ancient churches above the altar was the peristerium, in which the Blessed Sacrament was preserved. It had the form of a dove, representing the Holy Ghost, hovering in the air.[10]

10 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. I, no. 132.

Man's soul is the peristerium of his Maker, who has chosen it as His living temple and who seeks therein His own extrinsic glory.

But, as we are warned in the second book of Machabees, God did not choose the people for the place's sake, but the place for the people's sake.[11] God does not need our praise and service. It is all for our own sake that He demands it of us, that by so doing we may attain to eternal happiness. He has placed us wardens at the gate, precisely that we may hereafter enjoy the priceless reward of faithful service.

However, as Father Lalemant well remarks,[12] "In the good we do and in the good we possess, God leaves us the profit and advantage, reserving to Himself the glory; He will not have us attribute that to ourselves. We are not content with this allotment; we take God's share to ourselves; we desire to have the glory as well as the profit of our possessions."

While Alexander the Great was offering sacrifice in a temple, the torch badly burned the hand of an attendant page, who out of reverence restrained the slightest sign of pain. On which incident, St. Ambrose comments:[13] "Such was the reverence in the boy, that it overcame nature." How often are we not put to shame by this little pagan lad paying reverence and honor to his idols of metal and stone, while we, the guardians of the temple of the Triune

11 2 Mach. VI, 19.
12 Spirit. Doctr. p. 71.
13 St. Ambrose, de Virginibus.

God, are lukewarm in our devotion and love, if not openly disrespectful?

The church of St. Sophia at Constantinople was rebuilt by the Emperor Justinian in 537. When it was consecrated, he proudly boasted that he had surpassed even Solomon in its magnificence. He had a statue of the king of Israel set up in a niche of the forecourt, and addressing it he said, in a spirit of exultant pride: "Solomon, I have surpassed thee." [14] Some human temples with all their splendor of intellect and beauty of form render little glory to God. It is a self-sufficient warden that pretends to watch the gate, a boastful warden that arrogates to self and denies to God the beauty of the outer courts, a faithless warden, who gives his attention to the approaches to the temple, and becomes unmindful of the service of the inner sanctuary.

Yet it is the Psalmist who cries out: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? . . . Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor: and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields. The birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth!" [15]

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14 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. I, no. 132.
15 Ps. VIII, 5-10.

Man is the sublime intelligence that is to render back to its true source the glory of all created things. He is the divinely instituted medium whereby the voice of Nature may cry out and glorify her God. It was in this spirit, that the divine decree went forth: "Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." [16]

Man was made the master of material creation. From out his soul must rise unceasingly the glad acclaim of all nature praising the God and Creator of all things. In his contact with the creatures that serve as a setting for the temple of his soul, his every act must be one of reverence and love as a servant of the Most High. And above all, as the priest of the temple, in the use of these boundless gifts of God, he must daily make sacrifice within the holy of holies itself. His very body, with the perfection of its senses, is only a portico or entrance to the temple proper, but it is especially in watching over this great gateway of sin, that he is in truth to *Keep the Gate.*

Contrast for a minute the all-consuming pride and vanity of Herod with the fidelity of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. "And upon a day appointed, Herod, being arrayed in kingly ap-

16 Gen. I, 26.

parel, sat on the judgment seat and made an oration to them. And the people made acclamation, saying: It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honor to God: and, being eaten up by worms, he gave up the ghost." [17]

Two chapters further on we come to the other and more consoling picture. "And when the multitudes had seen what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice in the Lycaonian tongue, saying: The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter: but Paul, Mercury: because he was chief speaker. The priest also of Jupiter that was before the city, bringing oxen and garlands before the gate, would have offered sacrifice with the people. Which, when the apostles Barnabas and Paul had heard, rending their clothes they leaped out among the people, crying, and saying: Ye men, why do ye these things? We also are mortals, men like unto you. . . . And speaking these things, they scarce restrained the people from sacrificing to them." [18]

The man who uses creatures as his own, denies God the glory that belongs to God alone; and wrapping himself in the mantle of Herod, wrings from material creation a slavish adulation to his self-assumed divinity. Rather, in the spirit of Paul and Barnabas, we should

17 Acts XII, 21-23. 18 Acts XIV, 10-17.

hearken to the words of St. Bernard: "All things were given us for our good; but to this day they concur in different ways. Of these some are destined to preserve our life and strength, others to instruct us, others to recreate, and many others to correct and try us."

But above all, it is most necessary to remember that the morality of the act depends on the intention with which it is elicited. Even at the present day, Buddhism has many observances resembling those of Christianity, such as a hierarchy, monasticism, celibacy of the clergy, processions, pilgrimages, a kind of tonsure, choir-service.[19] In the use of creatures, externals count for nothing, unless directed by the proper internal spirit.

Through all the ages, there have been, in every state and station of life, countless chosen souls, who have achieved sanctity by the proper use of creatures, who have faithfully *Kept the Gate,* despite all allurements and the countless dangers of the world about them.

John Cardinal Fisher had mastered this principle, when, after being cast into prison because he would not subordinate his conscience to the pleasure of his king, he was approached by false friends, who vainly urged him to yield to his monarch's wishes, holding out to him the restoration of all the preferments that his fidelity to duty had cost him. To rid himself of their continued importunities, he bade them

19 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. I, no. 25.

return at a fixed day and hour, promising to be guided by their advice, provided only they could give a satisfactory answer to a single question, which he would propose to them. Rejoicing at what they regarded as an easy triumph, they went away, and again assembled at the appointed hour, ready, they thought, to answer any question that might be raised. Here was the question then proposed: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" Not one of them even attempted an answer. Crestfallen and abashed, they slunk away, leaving the Cardinal to win the martyr's crown. [20]

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? What does it profit him to amass the riches of all this world; what does it profit him to win the esteem and homage of all nations; what would it profit him to have even material creation acknowledge his power, what would it profit him to become the master of the universe, if when the summons of the death angel must be answered, he thereby loses his immortal soul? What are the fleeting pleasures of the passing day, what avails the gratification of our sinful appetites, what profit in a life of ease and comfort, if our temples have fallen into ruins, if our God is forgotten in the mad revel of life, if we are faithless to the purpose of our being, if we have failed to *Keep the Gate*.

20 Lucas, In the Morning of Life, p. 17.

A certain writer has graphically described the last moments of a great monarch, the extravagance of whose Court had been a scandal to Europe. "Louis XV lay dying. Where were his courtiers, his favorites? De Pompadour, Du Barry, on whom he had in eight years lavished more than ten million dollars, dollars squeezed from the throats of the peasants. Not one here in a chamber of the Little Trianon, this midnight of May 11, 1774. The King of France is alone. His face swollen, distorted, his eyes blind, a mass of corruption from smallpox, he lies alone. Two old women look in on him now and then. There is a lamp in the window. Courtiers see the flickering light from a distant window. When it goes out, the life of the Monarch of France will have gone too. Carriages are waiting in many courtyards. As the bells of Paris toll twelve, the light goes out, one of the old women has extinguished it. To horse everybody to welcome the new sovereign and his queen! Spurs jingle, carriages rattle noisily over the pavements. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*" [21]

Of what avail to that proud monarch was all the splendor and pomp of his Court, even in the eyes of the world, when once the scourge of God laid hold of him? Forsaken and abandoned by the sycophants and flatterers of yesterday, he was left to die a hideous outcast, paying the price of sin. He had made pleasure

21 Irish Monthly, March, 1906, p. 157.

his aim in life. The gratification of every forbidden passion was his chosen means. His obligations to God had been forgotten in the mad revel and luxury of his Court. He had betrayed the gate for every evil whim and fancy. And, in the end, what did it profit him?

How different the scene depicted by Canon Sheehan? "A lowly village church hidden away from civilization in a low-lying valley in the South of France. It is crowded, it is always crowded, night and day; and the air is thick with the respiration of hundreds of human beings, who linger and hover about the place, as if they could not tear themselves away. No wonder! There is a saint here. He is the attraction. It is evening. The Angelus has just rung. And a pale, withered, shrunken figure emerges from the sacristy and stands at the altar rails. Insignificant, old, ignorant, his feeble voice scarcely reaches the front bench. There is seated an attentive listener, drinking in with avidity the words of the old parish priest. He is clothed in black and white. He is the mighty preacher of Notre Dame (Lacordaire), and he sits, like a child, at the feet of M. Vianney." [22] Truly, one thing and one only is necessary—the service and love of our God and Maker!

This is not easy. It means a constant sacrifice of the entire man. It implies martyrdom to duty. From the dawn of reason we have

22 Sheehan, Under the Cedars and the Stars, Autumn, LXVII.

been prone to evil. Were we dependent on ourselves alone, we could not *Keep the Gate* for a single day. Once again, "unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." Even with Christ as the Companion of our watch, it does not mean that flesh and human weakness will no longer feel the assault of temptation. Neither does it mean, that the sting will be wanting from the lash, or that sensitive nature will be immune from suffering and affliction. We may be indifferent with Christ as to what is to be our portion. With trembling hands we may cling to our share of the cross. But the herbs of the anchoret will never lose their bitterness, nor will the physical suffering of the martyr be assuaged.

St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the words of St. Paul, "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,[23] cries out in ecstasy: "What sayest thou? Did Paul fear dangers? Yes, he did fear and was very much afraid: for he was human though he was Paul. This is no charge against Paul, but a weakness of nature, and a commendation of his resolve, in that, for all his fear of death and stripes, he did nothing unseemly through fear. They who say that he had not fear of stripes, not only do not elevate his character, but detract much from his praises. For if he had no fear, what constancy or what philosophy was there in his braving dangers? It is for this

[23] 1 Cor. II, 3.

that I admire him, that, fearing, aye, even trembling as he did at dangers, he everywhere ran his race victoriously."

Such too was the spirit of Isaac Jogues, the apostolic martyr of the Iroquois. After his escape from the Mohawks, he was sent to France, whence he returned to Canada as soon as occasion offered, to resume his work among the Indians. On his arrival, he found a delegation from the Iroquois making a treaty of peace with the French, and asking that a Black-robe be sent back with them as Commissioner to confirm the treaty. All eyes were turned to Jogues. While he accepted the mission with readiness, he has left it in his writings,[24] that at the very thought of returning to the Mohawks, his heart was seized with fear and trembling. And yet, as soon as his work as Commissioner was ended and he had made his report to Canada, he at once set out again, this time as an apostle and missionary, for the Mohawk Valley, where he was martyred at Ossernenon, on the very day after his arrival. Truly, stoicism is not indifference, nor is indifference stoicism.

On the other hand, one must not confound pusillanimity of spirit or mere sluggishness with true Christ-like indifference. Father Olivaint, in his last retreat, just before he was martyred by the Paris Commune, sounds a warning. "Indifference is not discouragement, the offspring of apathy. How often, practi-

24 Letter to his Superior, Fr. Lalemant, S.J., Montreal, April, 1646.

cally, does my indifference amount to this! Here perhaps is the light of the retreat." [25] And this too was written, almost on the eve of his death, by a man who had ever been pre-eminent for his indifference.

John II of France had taken the Crusader's cross, but before setting out, found himself unable to fulfil all the conditions of the Treaty of Brétigny with England, which had opened for him the English prison. He, accordingly, of his own initiative, went back to London as a prisoner, saying: "If truth were banished from the earth, it should find an asylum in the hearts of kings." King Edward of England hastened to break the chains that were thus asked of him, but before the necessary formalities could be gone through, John died in the Tower of London, a prisoner on parole.[26]

How often has my soul been bound by the chains of sin, when faithless at my post, I have betrayed the gate? This sanctuary of my soul, destined by God for Himself and for Himself alone, I have defiled by making myself a little god in my relations to creatures. And yet, my merciful Redeemer has stricken off the shackles of my sins, and placed me there again at my post to *Keep the Gate*. He only asks, that I take Him anew as the Companion of my watches. I once pledged my word to do so, and yet I failed to keep my promise. Oh, let me now renew the pledge before it is too late.

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25 Annual Retreat, 1870. 26 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. III, p. 516.

High above the city of Nome in Alaska rises the Catholic church with a lofty steeple, tipped with a golden cross. Lighted by electricity, this brilliant cross is visible for twenty miles, and serves as a beacon-light for travelers inland and for ships at sea. It stands out clear and distinct, apparently unsupported in the black sky. The Eskimos call it the "White-man's Star." During the long winter nights, it serves as a rallying point, and has been the occasion of saving the life of many a miner, who, trudging home to camp, had lost the trail.[27]

Whether tossed upon the stormy sea of temptation, or wandering in the dreary wastes of desolation, the Sanctuary Lamp must be our "White-man's Star," guiding us to the safe haven of rest eternal. Foot-sore and weary, toiling along the path of life; sin-burdened and disheartened, we lose our way in the cold and dreary waste. And then, far off we see a glint of light, the faintest twinkle of a ruby beam. Oh, fix your eye on that true beacon-light of hope, muster your waning strength, and as your tottering steps draw nearer to the goal, you will find that the star has led you safely to the cross-surmounted tabernacle, where dwells your Eucharistic Master, your only true and faithful Guide.

It was only with the strength derived from daily communion that Alan was able to *Keep*

27 Devine, *Across Widest America*, pp. 273, 274.

the Gate, and it is only by keeping my eyes fixed on my "White-man's Star," that I can hope to guard the sanctuary of my soul from sin, that I can aspire to enter fully into the spirit of this great fundamental truth, whereby creation round about me is to help me in the service of my temple, and not lead me to desert my trust.

* * *

PRAYER

O God, the Protector of all who hope in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, multiply Thy mercy upon us, that, with Thee for our Ruler and Leader, we may so pass through the good things of this life as not to lose those which are eternal.[28]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 9
" III, " 16
" III, " 15
" II, " 4
" I, " 15
" III, " 27
" I, " 22

28 Prayer of Mass, 3rd Sunday after Pentecost.

CHAPTER II

Desecration of the Temple

We shall sleep in our confusion, and our shame shall cover us, because we have sinned against the Lord our God. (JEREM. III, 25.)

WHEN the angels, at the bidding of the Omnipotent God, were called into being, they were pure spirits untrammeled by bodies of flesh and blood, bright intelligences capable far beyond the limited intellect of man. They were destined to serve their God and Maker in love and reverence for all eternity. Before being definitively admitted to the Beatific Vision, it was but meet that their fidelity should be tried. According to some theologians, at the instant of their creation they were allowed to behold in anticipation the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made man, and were called upon to bow down to do Him reverence. If faithful in that first moment of existence, they were to have been admitted to the presence of their God, thereafter to remain incapable of sin.

Many there were who could not bring themselves to do homage to a nature lower than their own, even when that nature was elevated

and hypostatically united with the Divine in the one Divine Personality of the Word, and so in foolish pride they refused obedience to their God. Straightway all the rebel host were cast out of heaven. Hell was created as their portion, and for that single mortal sin, for all eternity they expiate their fault in the fiery abyss. Yet the God who thus ruthlessly destroys His handiwork, and for a single act of disobedience transforms His angels of heaven into demons of hell, while a God of justice, is no less a God of mercy and of love!

Well may Isaias cry out: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to earth, that didst wound the nations? And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides on the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like the most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit. They that see thee shall turn toward thee and behold thee. Is this the man that troubled the earth, that shook kingdoms?" [1]

Or, as the vision of the Apocalypse has it: "And there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And they prevailed not; neither was their place

[1] Is. XIV, 12-16.

found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world. And he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." [2]

While theologians may differ as to the details of the sin of the angels, there can be no question but that it was in general a sin of pride. "Pride is the beginning of all sin," declares Ecclesiasticus,[3] and we are warned in Tobias, "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its being." [4]

St. Thomas distinguishes three kinds of pride: (1) An inclination to pride. In this sense, pride is said to be the beginning of all sin. This inclination is not a sin in itself, but it is a consequence of sin and the root of sin. (2) An actual transgression of a precept. This is the general condition consequent to all sin. (3) An inordinate appetite for one's own excellence, especially as regards dignity and honor. This is one of the seven capital sins, and the first sin of the angels. St. Thomas further is of opinion, that the particular sin of Lucifer was, that he wished to attain his end by his own efforts independently of grace.

The Fathers of the Church, no less than the theologians, differ widely in their explanation of this sin of pride. St. Theodoret suggests, that the angels were not satisfied with the gifts

2 Apoc. XII, 7-9. 3 Eccli. X, 15. 4 Tob. IV, 14.

they had received, but seeking greater, they succumbed to pride.[5]

St. Augustine was of the opinion, that the angels turned traitors because they were so elated, that they desired to be self-sufficient in the attainment of their end.[6]

The more matter-of-fact St. Jerome offers the explanation, that Satan was not content with the knowledge he had received nor with the power given him.[7] This would imply discontent and inordinate ambition.

St. Gregory the Great is much of the same opinion, when he writes: "Only the Most High rules over all and is subject to none; Satan perversely desired to imitate Him, and refused to be subject even to Him." [8]

St. Prudentius takes a more subtle view of the matter. "He was persuaded that he was his own first cause and that independently of God, by his own forces he had his being." [9]

Some theologians hold that Satan sinned by an inordinate attachment to his natural beatitude, which he loved more intently than he should, and in which he wished to rest, turning aside from supernatural beatitude. Still other theologians, on the contrary, teach that it was an inordinate attachment to supernatural beatitude, which he wished to attain without merits.

Suarez explains, that Lucifer sinned, inasmuch as he inordinately sought the excellence

5 Serm. 3 cont. Graec.
6 Civ. Dei, XXII, 1.
7 In Ezech. XXVIII.
8 Moral. XXIX, 7.
9 In Hamart.

of the hypostatic union for his own nature. While William of Paris is no less ready with the explanation that Satan did not wish to be subject to God as a servant, but as a son; to be himself independent and to be over all the others.

The Rt. Rev. Mgr. Delalle, Vicar Apostolic of Natal, fully authenticates the following fact. While exorcising a possessed girl named Germana at St. Michael's Mission, Natal, in May, 1907, after forcing from the spirit its name, Diaor, as well as that of its master, Lucifer, he put the question: "Now tell me, why were you cast out of heaven?" "Because," came the answer, "God showed us His Son made man, and commanded us to adore Him: but we would not, because He had taken unto Himself an inferior nature." The girl was sixteen years of age, utterly ignorant of Latin, and yet the Bishop addressed her only in that tongue, while she answered usually in Zulu, but sometimes in Latin.[10]

Father Lalemant, long before the foregoing incident occurred, was much in accord with this exposition of the angels' fall, writing as he did: "When God created the angels, He made known to them the plan of the Incarnation, and set before them the Man-God to be adored by them, having willed that their eternal happiness should be dependent on Him. The glory of the good angels is their reward for the homage they

10 Cf. Rome, Jan. 23, 1909.

rendered the Incarnate Word. The damnation of the bad angels is their chastisement for refusing to adore a God made man." [11]

Listen to Father Meschler, who in his Life of Christ beautifully summarizes the same view.[12] "The angels broke from the bosom of the Almighty like streams of light, numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea; a vast world, with innumerable hierarchies of knowledge and power, of spiritual and supernatural beauty. . . . The opinion of St. Bernard[13] and several other theologians may be considered as very probable; namely, that the test consisted in this, that God revealed to the angels the future Incarnation of His Son, and required them, as a just consequence, to recognize Him, the Son, as their Lord and Advocate, and to submit to Him. . . . Thus, then, the fallen angels, deprived of grace, stripped of all consoling, supernatural truth, hardened and obdurate in sin, have lost heaven forever and incurred the twofold punishment of the damned; some of them being banished for a time to our earthly sphere for the trial of mankind,[14] the remainder to the abyss of hell for the punishment of the lost. To abide in hell is assuredly the portion which awaits them after the judgment." [15]

With the fall of the angels, in the fulness of time the creative plan, decreed from all eternity,

11 Spirit. Doctr., p. 336.
12 Meschler, Life of Christ, I, pp. 40-42.
13 Serm. 17 in Cantic.
14 Eph. II, 2; VI, 11, 12.
15 2 Peter II, 4.

quickly evolved another intelligent being, but in a far different form of existence.

"And the Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it. And he commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death. And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself. . . Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." [16]

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise? And the woman answered him, saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise, we do eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said

16 Gen. II, 15-18; 21-23.

to the woman: No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that on what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons.

"And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise. And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Where are thou? And he said: I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And he said to him: And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And Adam said: The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the woman: Why hast thou done this? And she answered: The serpent deceived me, and I did eat.

"And the Lord God said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle, and beasts of the earth.

Upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel. To the woman also he said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee. And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return. And Adam called the name of his wife Eve: because she was the mother of all the living.

"And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them. And he said: Behold, Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil: now, therefore, lest perhaps he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. And the Lord God sent him out of the paradise of pleasure, to till the earth from which he was taken. And he cast out Adam; and

placed before the paradise of pleasure cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." [17]

Again in his Life of Christ, Father Meschler remarks in passing: Satan "concealed himself under the form of a very insinuating and ingratiating animal; he attacked Eve as being the weaker, and laid siege to the spiritual, interior part of her being, because the senses presented no point for an attack on account of their freedom from irregular concupiscence. He sought to seduce her soul to distrust of God, curiosity, pride, and lastly sensuality. He intended that Eve should then play the part of temptress to the man. . . . It would appear that Eve at any rate, believed the lying words of Satan, and allowed herself to be duped and led into interior and exterior sin. Adam may have fallen rather through compliance with Eve's suggestion. . . . This punishment (deprivation of sanctifying grace) made itself felt in the deprivation of sensible gifts, which all depended upon the possession of sanctifying grace. These gifts were: freedom from irregular concupiscence, immortality, and the enjoyment of paradise. Irregular concupiscence showed itself in our first parents at once, in their shame at being naked; death was formally announced to them and the banishment from paradise to the curse-laden earth followed immediately." [18]

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17 Gen. III.
18 Meschler, Life of Christ, I, pp. 45-47.

To sum up briefly. Our first parents were created and placed in the garden of Eden, there to remain on probation for a time, masters of all the creatures and pleasures that surrounded them. One single restraining precept alone there was to test their fidelity. Of the fruit of a single tree they might not eat. For in the hour that they should transgress the prohibition they were to die the death. Satan, jealous of the race of man, raised up by God to take the places in heaven once destined for himself and his fellow rebels, set pitfalls for the woman, who hearkened to his reasonings, and then led man in turn to disregard the commandment of their Maker. On the instant, they were called to reckoning. Cast out from paradise, from that hour they were doomed to eke out a miserable existence in the sweat of the brow. The earth no longed yielded its fruits without man's toil and labor. Sickness and suffering entered the world with sin. All those bright qualities of soul that marked the days of primal innocence were at an end. Temptation beset their every step. Their children, born in sorrow, lived in strife, and one became the murderer of his brother. During nine long centuries and more they expiated their fault, toiling along the thorny path of life, and then, despite the fact that they had most probably never grievously offended their God again, there passed on to their children, and their children's children, the same burden of sin and sorrow

and crushing anguish of spirit even to the end of time. And all for a single mortal sin, a single transgression of the divine precept, without which, there would have been no evil in the act itself! And this, too, from the hand of a loving God, as merciful as He is just!

What must be our own shame and confusion with the realization of all our past iniquities before us, in the presence of that God, who for one mortal sin of thought cast down from heaven the chosen spirits of His love; who for one only violation of His precept has doomed the human race to untold bitterness and sorrow. Each mortal sin deserves all this from God. And yet we hasten on from sin to sin in wanton rashness. Perhaps we pause just long enough in our mad revel of sin, to turn to God for a single day. Perchance some cross or threatened trial forces us to our knees, and brings us to the feet of the priest, where we lay down the burden of our guilt. Hardly has the threatened danger passed, scarcely has the pardon of our crimes been registered in heaven, when we again stand criminals before the bar of God's justice. Headlong have we again rushed into sin.

Nay, more! Gaze down there into hell, and count the souls that are burning there to-day for a single mortal sin. Perhaps at this moment, there are in those fiery depths souls you have sent before you to prepare the way; unfortunate souls, who had not known sin until

they met you; doomed souls, who yielded to your example, if not to your direct solicitation; lost souls, who were summoned to their reckoning, still burdened with the sins that you induced them to commit, without an instant in which to make their peace with God.

Have you ever knelt by the deathbed of one dear to you; a brother, a sister, or perhaps a boon companion? Recall to mind the picture of that form, tossing in a fevered agony, as you clung to the last fond hope that Heaven would hear your prayer. Was that dear one ever scandalized in you? Did you open those eyes, once innocent, to sin by your example? Were you the agent of Satan in darkening that soul with its first sin, perhaps the very day when this dread malady began to assert itself and the seeds of disease had already weakened the power of resistance? Is this fever that now consumes the strength and racks the anguished frame, but a breath from out the depths of hell? Are those wasted hands that clutch and tear the clothing, but beating off in vain the infernal demons who have come to claim their own? Is that heaving breast catching with difficulty each gasping breath, but gathering strength to hurl its curses for all eternity against you, the cause and author of its ruin? And when the last, violent, convulsive struggle is over, as you cling to all that remains on earth of the one you professed to love so dearly, has the soul itself slipped from your grasp down to the

lowest depths of hell for never-ending torments. Is that soul waiting there to-day, at this very hour, cursing you as the author of its ruin, demanding of an all-just God, that, in His own good time, you may be given as companion of the torture, that for all eternity it may wreak on you its fiendish hate?

Oh, the iniquity of a single mortal sin! Many are the instances recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, showing how God has meted out punishment for single offences, even when the fault may not have been a grievous one. Because of a sin of doubt, Moses felt the weight of God's anger. "Because you have not believed me, to sanctify me before the children of Israel, you shall not bring these people into the land, which I will give them." [19]

Azarias and eighty priests endeavored to stop King Ozias, who had made bold to arrogate to himself the function of the priest in the offering of incense, and an irate God struck him a leper on the spot for his sin of irreverence. "And Ozias was angry, and holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there rose a leprosy in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the Lord at the altar of incense. And Azarias the high priest, and all the rest of the priests, looked upon him, and saw the leprosy in his forehead; and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, himself also being frightened, hasted

19 Num. xx, 12.

to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord." [20]

Yet God spares me in my iniquity! Daily I run from sin to sin, without a fear of its awful consequences. Why is it that God has not stricken me dead in the very act of sin? Why do creatures still sustain me? Why do the saints in heaven intercede in my behalf? Why does not the angel with the flaming sword which guarded the entrance to paradise, vindicate the honor of his God by slaying me? Why do not the guardian spirits of those souls that I have helped to send to hell, drag me down to share the torments of my victims? Why do not the faithful hosts in heaven cast me forth as they did the rebel angels? Why do not those very rebels seize me, and in their glee bear me off to share their burnings, since I am deeper steeped in sin than they? Why is it? Gaze at the crucifix and read the answer. Because the lips of Him I crucify are daily pleading in my behalf: "Father, forgive him, he knows not what he does." Yes, it is the secret of Calvary. I am spared to start my life anew, for Christ has died for me. I still have time to *Keep the Gate.*

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20 2 Paral. XXVI, 19, 20.

PRAYER

Arise in thy might, we beseech thee, O Lord, and come; that by Thy protection we may be rescued from the dangers which threaten us because of our sins, and by Thy deliverance may attain to salvation.[21]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 55
" III, " 4
" III, " 14

21 Prayer of Mass, 1st Sunday in Advent.

CHAPTER III

Idols in the Temple Court

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. (2 Cor. vi, 16.)

THE Temple of Solomon was consecrated amid the glad acclaim of the Children of Israel. The minutest detail of the service of the Sanctuary had been dictated by God Himself, and most carefully recorded in the Book of the Law. All that human ingenuity could devise was further enacted, to safeguard the purity of the nation's worship. And yet, the story of the ancient Jews is a constant repetition of turning to idols, only to be recalled for a time by the fiery denunciations of the prophets sent by God.

Iniquity found its climax during the reign of King Manasses. "He set up altars to Baal, and made groves, as Achab the king of Israel had done. And he adored all the host of heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said: In Jerusalem I will put my name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the temple of the Lord. . . . He

set also an idol of the grove, which he had made, in the temple of the Lord; concerning which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son: In this temple, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name for ever." [1]

Shocked, as well we may be, by the presence of idols in the Temple's court, what is this in comparison with the idol of sin enshrined in the living temple of the soul, from which its God and Maker has been banished? In our external life we may be models of perfection, looked up to with respect and deference by poor struggling mortals round about. Could they but penetrate the veil spiritual that shrouds the soul, and behold perhaps the idol of sin enthroned in the place of God, how they would shrink from us in horror and loathing scorn!

On November 10, 1793, in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris, was celebrated the feast of the goddess of reason, personified by an opera singer of infamous character, seated on the altar, the crucifix under her feet, and enveloped in a cloud of incense, while a crowd of maniacs sang Chénier's hymn of liberty in her honor. A consecrated host, stolen from one of the churches, was carried in procession through the streets, amid the derisive jests and shocking profanity of the mob. A constitutional priest of his own accord trampled on the

[1] 4 Kings xxi, 3-5, 7.

crucifix, crying out: "It is not enough to destroy the tyrant of the body, let us also crush out the tyrant of the soul." [2]

Again, in the midst of one of the regular sessions of the Convention, a number of soldiers entered the hall wearing pontifical vestments; they were followed by a double line of men of the lowest class, clothed with copes, chasubles and dalmatics; behind them were borne on handbarrows great heaps of chalices, ciboriums and monstrances of gold and silver. The procession filed past to the air of republican songs, and the actors in the sacrilegious scene concluded by publicly renouncing all worship other than that of liberty.[3]

Even those who are indifferent in matters of religion, are duly shocked by this spoliation of the churches and desecration of sacred vessels. To the children of the Church is necessarily added a feeling of horror at such ingenuity of diabolic hate. And yet, the spoliation of the human soul by sin is far more heinous in the sight of God, than the destruction of the ornaments of the altar and the misuse of sacred vestments.

If man but stopped to consider the intrinsic malice of sin, its innate foulness and despicable character, its essential bearing on the soul of the perpetrator, he might be withheld from his mad onrush to destruction. In this spirit, then,

2 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. III, no. 388.
3 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. IV, p. 539.

let us devote a few minutes to answering the question, "What is sin?"

To prevent the pilgrimages of the Christians to the scenes of Our Saviour's life and passion, the Emperor Hadrian erected statues of heathen deities on every spot sanctified by holy memories. Jove found his sanctuary near the Sepulcher, and an image of Venus was placed on Golgotha.[4] What would we think of one who called himself a Christian, hastening to offer incense to these idols on the very spots sanctified by our Saviour's blood? What must we think of sinful man, erecting the statue of Satan in the sanctuary of his soul, sanctified though it was by the blood of Christ, and readily bowing down and offering the incense of service to the archfiend?

What, then, is sin? What is it by its very nature, considered independently of the punishments meted out to it by an all-just God? St. Alphonsus Liguori answers: "Mortal sin is commonly defined by theologians to be a turning away from the Immutable Good. According to St. Thomas it is a turning of one's back on the Sovereign Good. Of this God complains in the words of His prophet, saying: Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord; thou art gone backward." [5]

Father Chaignon, commenting on the nature and deformity of mortal sins in themselves, well remarks: "They must possess supreme defor-

[4] Guggenberger, Gen. Hist. I, 26. [5] Jerem. xv, 6.

mity, since they are infinitely opposed to sovereign beauty. By sinning I revolted against the Lord; I presumed to make a trial of strength with the Almighty God. What audacity! By sinning I offended against all the perfections of God; His power, since I knew that He could destroy me at the very moment of my transgression; His wisdom and goodness, in forsaking His sweet and amiable laws, in order to follow the bent of my passions; His immensity and holiness in forcing Him, as it were, to be the witness of my disorders. . . . What iniquity! By sinning I did not only show contempt of my sovereign benefactor, but turned against Him, all His blessings; using to outrage Him all that He had given me to serve Him. . . . What ingratitude! By sinning I preferred death to life, hell to heaven, Satan to Jesus Christ. . . . I forsook a tender father in order to serve a perfidious master, the most cruel of all tyrants. . . . What blindness, what folly! O my soul, couldst thou but see thyself, in the state to which so many abominations have reduced thee! Thy rights, thy merits lost, thy beauty changed into monstrous deformity, thou shouldst be terrified at such a sight!" [6]

Again, in another place, the same author observes, "Every sin, says St. Bernard, attacks some attribute of God; anger His meekness, lying His unchanging truth, hatred His charity,

[6] Chaignon, Sac. Med. Bk. I, Med. xxxix, 2nd Point.

sensual pleasure His purity. And still more, says the same Father, every sin deals Him the death-blow as far as its power goes. Ask the sinner what it is that disturbs him in his sin? Ah, there exists a God who sees it and will avenge it. Ask him what sacrilegious desire arises in his heart? I wish there was no God, to behold, to condemn, to punish my transgressions. . . . O sinner, thine iniquity will injure none but thee; although thou hast conceived the horrible desire to destroy almighty God if this were in thy power." [7]

During the persecution of Constantine Copronymus, the Abbot Stephen the Younger was commanded by the Iconoclast to come to Constantinople from his retreat in the mountains. As he stood before the Emperor, he drew from his cowl a small coin bearing the Emperor's effigy, and said: "What punishment shall I suffer if I trample this under my feet?" Throwing down the coin, he trod upon it, and was forthwith cast into prison.[8] When the creative force of God called the immortal soul of man into being, He stamped it with His own image, to mark it as His own. Now, as St. Augustine wisely remarks, with the perfect image of the Godhead found in the Divine Son alone, but with an imperfect image, even as the likeness of the King is stamped upon the currency of the realm. Great is the loss of value

7 Chaignon, Sac. Med. Bk. I, Med. XXIX, 1st Point.
8 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. II, no. 177.

in the silver coin, when its royal impress has been erased. It becomes merely a bit of silver until, reminted, the image is stamped anew upon its surface. Let but the image of God be effaced from the soul of man by sin, and this coin of heaven, once valued at the price of Calvary, becomes but worthless dross, until restamped by sacramental grace in the divine mint of forgiveness. In a sense, sin not only effaces God's image from the soul, but in its place impresses the likeness of Satan, for he is the actual master of the land, whose image is found on the coin that passes current.

What then is sin? The betrayal of the gate entrusted to our keeping; the casting of God from out His own sanctuary, the soul, and the installing of Satan in His stead; the idolatrous worship of the prince of darkness on the very spot that was sanctified by the blood divine; the debasement and transformation of the coinage of heaven into the coinage of hell.

Again, what is sin? A thoughtless child is loitering by the way. He hears the warning of the deadly rattler. He gazes on the hideous head raised aloft ready to strike; he is fascinated by the glistening eyes; the darting fang has caught his childish fancy. A gentle hand would withhold him from springing to meet the vicious reptile, a kindly voice warns him of the deadly venom in the fang. He casts off the restraining hand, he heeds not the warning voice, but running, takes the ugly

head into his little hands, and presses the quivering fang into his bosom, and fastens his own glistening eyes on the fiery orbs of the serpent. The venom reaches home. It stings, it smarts. He feels his life-strength ebbing away. Yet, child that he is, he clings to his new-found fancy, and strives to check his tears of pain with forced hysterical laughter. Man, loitering along the path of life, hears the warning of the infernal serpent, and regardless of restraining grace, bares his own soul to the deadly poison, and tries to blunt the anguish and pain it costs by gratification of eyes, or touch, or some other sense of the body.

What then is sin? Gaze up at the crucifix. Every evil thought is another thorn in the crown of agony, placed in mockery of Christ's kingship over the heart that owns no king but the Cæsar of illicit pleasure. Every sinful word is another bruising blow on the parched lips, that thirst for the soul, now stamped with the seal of Lucifer. Every sinful act drives the nails deeper and deeper into the hands and feet, the hammer of sin crushing the flesh and bone without mercy. Every evil affection of the heart thrusts home the lance into the Sacred Heart, and exhausts the last drop of precious blood. Would you, could you, with a full realization of what the Cross means to you, appreciating the fact that the Cross is the only reason why you are not in hell this day, tear down that image, cast it on the pavement,

trample it under foot, stamp upon it with all the blind hate of which you are capable, until there remain but splintered wood and a misshapen mass of metal? Could you bring yourself to obliterate the image of the Saviour from the Cross of salvation? No, you dare not do it. You cannot do it. And yet you ruthlessly tread, not on a representation of brass, but on the very image of God Himself, impressed on your immortal soul. At least you did so but yesterday, perhaps this very day, but never from this hour will any power of earth or hell lead you again to desecrate the sacred image of your God. Raise up the poor, disfigured, shattered form. Enshrine it deep in your affections. In sorrow and contrition, bring back the exiled Christ to the temple of your soul now purged of the idol of Satan, and strive untiringly for the future to amend the sacrilegious desecrations of the past, again a faithful warden, to *Keep the Gate* with Christ.

Having in some small way, brought home to ourselves a realization of the intrinsic malice of sin, we may now go a step further and ask ourselves the question: "Who, then, is man, that he should rise up against his Creator and cry: I will not serve?" Gaze up into the star-lit heavens and behold the magnitude of the universe, and weigh well the words of Father Houck: "Though light travels with the rapidity of 186,000 miles per second, nevertheless it requires about four years for the light of the

nearest star to reach us. . . . When we look at the little gem that is called the Pole-star, we behold the light that left this star forty-four years ago. The Galaxy, that luminous belt of stars which Agnes Mary Clarke beautifully calls 'The hem of the robe of the Most High,' has a distance of 500 light-years. When we admire The Galaxy, therefore, we are beholding the light that left it before the discovery of America by Columbus. What is still more incredible, some astronomers maintain that there are stars which have been created in the beginning of the world, whose light has not yet reached us; and this in spite of the fact that in less than one second, yea, in the twinkling of an eye, light can make the tour of the globe—a distance of 25,000 miles." [9]

Later on, Father Houck again remarks: "What mind is able to grasp the proportions according to which the Supreme Architect has designed and constructed the universe? Its magnitude baffles all description. Castor and Pollux have stood side by side in the heavens —at least to human eyes—for 4,000 years, yet they are flying apart at the velocity of sixty-eight miles per second, which in a day amounts to over 5,000,000 miles. This for forty centuries, and still they are 'The Twins' to our eyes to-day." [10]

Yet, it is I, an atom lost in space, who would

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9 Houck, Our Palace Wonderful, pp. 53, 54.
10 Ibid., p. 69.

by sin defy the omnipotent God and Creator of all things, whose initial impulse is obeyed by all the celestial bodies in their appointed paths and orbits!

Reflections such as these must have inspired Canon Sheehan, as he wrote: "What a grotesque, beautiful, ridiculous, sublime little being is Man? Hanging on for a brief moment by the slender foothold he has on that little bubble in space, the Earth—he looks out from its darkened side into the Immensities that wheel above him; and he wants to understand them all, nay, to grasp them in his tiny fingers, and with his little mind. An insect looking out with wide, wondering eyes from an oak leaf in a forest, and feeling his way timorously with his antennae, is not more insignificant." [11]

It was the same realization of his nothingness, that wrung from the eloquent Bossuet the cry of self-abasement: "God, once more I cry: What are we? If I look before me, what a vast space there is in which I am not! If I look behind, what an immensity there is which knows me not! And so tiny a point do I occupy in the immeasurable abyss of time that I am well-nigh nothing! I have been sent only to count as a unit among millions, and even so I was not needed; the world's drama would have been acted, had I remained behind the scenes." [12]

Compare for an instant the almighty power

11 Sheehan, Under the Cedars and the Stars, Winter, xxxiv.
12 Bossuet, Lenten Sermons.

and majesty of the Godhead as depicted by Isaias, with the hollow nothingness of the vanities of the creature as described in the Book of Wisdom. "Who," cries Isaias, speaking of his God, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens with his palm? Who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath forwarded the spirit of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor, and hath taught him? With whom hath he consulted, and who hath instructed him, and taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold, the islands are as a little dust. And Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity. To whom then have you likened God? Or what image will you make for him? . . . It is he that sitteth upon the globe of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as locusts: he that stretcheth out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. He that bringeth the searchers of secrets to nothing, that hath made the judges of the earth as vanity. And surely their stock

was neither planted, nor sown, nor rooted in the earth. Suddenly he hath blown upon them, and they are withered: and a whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. And to whom have ye likened me, or made me equal, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these things, who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names. By the greatness of his might and strength, and power, not one of them was missing." [13]

And the antithesis is answered back by the inspired Book of Wisdom. "What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves: whereof when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters. Or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air and parting it by the force of her flight; she moved her wings, and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterward of her way. Or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known. So we also being born, forthwith ceased to be, and have been able to

[13] Is. XL, 12-18; 22-26.

show no mark of virtue: but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these the sinners said in hell." [14]

Well may the inspired pages echo and reëcho the selfsame theme, proclaiming on the one hand the glories of the Godhead, only to have the nothingness of man held up in contrast. "The Lord is terrible and exceeding great," exclaims Ecclesiasticus, "and his power is admirable. Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for he shall yet far exceed and his magnificence is wonderful." [15] And the Psalmist makes reply: "Man's days are as grass: as the flower of the field so shall he flourish. For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be: and he shall know his place no more." [16]

"The Lord's ways are in a tempest and a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet," [17] cries out the Prophet Nahum. And it is Ecclesiasticus who now makes answer: "All men are earth and ashes." [18]

The inspired David proclaims: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein." [19] And Job confesses: "Against a leaf, that is carried away with the wind, thou showest thy power, and thou pursuest a dry straw." [20] Once again King David takes up his refrain: "He looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble." [21] And

14 Wisdom v, 8-14.
15 Eccli. XLIII, 31, 32.
16 Ps. CII, 15, 16.
17 Nahum I, 3.
18 Eccli. XVII, 31.
19 Ps. XXIII, 1.
20 Job XIII, 25.
21 Ps. CIII, 32.

the humble Job again replies: "Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state." [22]

Yet, it is the creature who turns against his Maker, and exiles Him from out His chosen sanctuary of the soul, and in His place enshrines some sinful pleasure, until the wonder is, that outraged nature does not rise up in protest to avenge its God. Hearken to the warning of Father Roothaan. "Let us fill ourselves with the thought that in consequence of our sin we have given all nature the right to revolt against us. It is related in the Book of Kings,[23] that when David was followed on his march by the insults of the unhappy Semei, the faithful Abisai said: Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? The indignation of Abisai was undoubtedly righteous; but much more so is the indignation of the angels against the sinner. St. Francis Borgia was so penetrated with this feeling, that when he saw some oxen in the fields, he believed that these animals should be avenged on him; or, still more, that the workmen should come out of their shops thus to take vengeance upon him for the injuries he had done to God." [24]

When Wamba was chosen King by the Spanish Goths in 672, he resisted, and urged his

22 Job xiv, 1. 23 2 Kings xvi, 9.
24 Retreat given at Vals, 1848.

weight of years. One of the Dukes rose up and said: "Either promise to be our King, or you fall at once beneath our swords. You go hence a King or a corpse." [25] The selfsame words are addressed to every man by his passions. He must be their king and absolute ruler, or he quickly falls a victim to their violence. He cannot compromise. He cannot *Keep the Gate* and at the same time parley with them. He cannot have his God enshrined within his soul if he would find for them a niche or corner in the outer courts.

After the fall of Constantinople, Mahomet II, who styled himself the conqueror of two Empires and seven Kingdoms, gazed back and saw in the very heart of his domain one spot that still held out against him; one rocky pile over which still floated the standard of the cross. Rhodes had never yielded to the power of his arms. Messengers were forthwith despatched to summon the Knights to acknowledge his suzerainty. A yearly tribute, or war to the death, were the alternatives. The Knights made answer to the embassy: "Tell your Master, that our predecessors purchased this island at the price of their blood, and that we will give our lives rather than sacrifice our independence or that of our religion." [26]

When the fiends of hell surge round about the gate demanding tribute, fearlessly must we

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25 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. II, p. 270.
26 Knights of Saint John, p. 59.

hurl back a like defiance: "Go tell your Master, that Christ Himself purchased this soul with the last drop of His most precious blood. Go tell your Master, that I do but hold this soul in trust for Christ. Remind your Master of that day on Calvary's Heights, when his power was forever crushed, and tell your Master that I will give my very life, rather than sacrifice the allegiance I owe to God." With spirit such as this safely you'll *Keep the Gate.*

* * *

PRAYER

Arise in Thy might, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come; and with great power succor us, that, by the help of Thy grace, that which is hindered by our sins may be hastened by Thy merciful forgiveness.[27]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 40
" III, " 3
" III, " 8
" I, " 11

27 Prayer of Mass, 4th Sunday in Advent.

CHAPTER IV

The Price of Idolatry *

The sinners in Sion are afraid, trembling hath seized upon the hypocrites. Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings.
(Is. XXXIII, 14.)

IN THE ordinary course of life, the descent to mortal sin is gradual through recurrent venial sins and minor faults. As a natural consequence of repeated small transgressions, the love of God grows cold, the intellect becomes clouded, the will is weakened.

Our retreat thus far has aroused in us a new spirit and strong resolve, and we find ourselves truly abhorring mortal sin, awake to the terrible consequences of sin, and firm in our determination to set our lives in order by detesting everything worldly and vain. Mindful, however, of past weakness, and realizing that human nature at times requires a stimulus of its own, it behooves us now to pray, that if as a consequence of venial sin we ever again become unmindful of the love of God, then at least the fear of hell may deter us from committing a mortal sin.

* It is suggested that certain passages in this chapter should be omitted from reading at table. To aid the reader, these passages are indicated by type set indented at the left.

Just to the South of the ancient city of Jerusalem was Gehenna, the Vale of Hinnom, the "Valley of the Groans of Children." Here the idolatrous kings of Juda, Achaz, Manasses and Amon, set the example to the nation of sacrificing their children to Moloch, a brazen idol, symbolic of the summer sun in his glowing and withering might. In the form of a man with the head of an ox, the hollow figure was constructed with cunning ingenuity, so that the flames from a furnace beneath raised the metal to a white heat. Following the example of their kings, the worshipers of the prince of darkness flocked to the valley, to place their own infants on the outstretched arms of the idol, while with the tumultuous sound of trumpets, timbrels and other harsh instruments they strove to drown the agonizing shrieks and cries of their little ones.[1] In that day, unnatural mothers joyfully sacrificed their helpless infants, then joined in the mad dance and wilder song of the devotees of Satan, watching unmoved the babes of their bosoms, extending their little arms in piteous supplication, until they writhed from the fiery clutch of the monster, only to fall into the furnace beneath.

This valley in after years was used as a receptacle for all filthiness, the general deposit for the city's sewage, and became symbolic of all that is terrible and foul. Hence, our Divine Saviour speaks of the final abode of the wicked

1 Geikie, The Holy Land and the Bible, I, p. 546.

as Gehenna,[2] thereby signifying the miserable burning of souls in the place of torment, the raucous clamors and cries of the tormented, the confused and barbarous noise of the tormentors, together with the loathsome filthiness of the place.

There is a tendency in this purblind world to-day, to question the existence of a hell. But more than one startling incident is told, wherein the eyes of the professed doubter have been opened. One evening in 1812, Count Orloff and General V., two freethinkers, made a compact at Moscow that if there should be a hell, at which they scoffed, the first to go there would return and tell the other. Soon after, General V. set out with the Russian army to repel Napoleon. One morning, some weeks later, Count Orloff was lying in bed not thinking of his absent friend, when the bed-curtains were suddenly dashed aside, and General V. appearing before him said, pale as death with his hand on his breast, "There is a hell, and I am there." In fright and distress, the Count got up, and made his way in morning gown and slippers to the Governor of Moscow, where the incident occurred. The Governor, a close relative of Mgr. Segur who relates the fact, tried to reason with him, and put down the whole thing to nightmare or a delusion of some kind. A couple of weeks later, word arrived at Moscow that General V. had been killed by a shell strik-

2 Matt. xviii, 6-10.

ing him in the breast on the day and at the hour when he was seen by Count Orloff.[3]

That hell is a definite place, is practically the unanimous opinion of the Fathers, and they base their belief on many citations of the Scriptures, but especially on the parable of Dives and Lazarus.[4] So convincing is the argument to all whose moral sight has not been blinded by sin or prejudice, that many Protestant divines have written in its defense. Listen to the testimony of Doctor Shedd: "Founded in ethics, in law, and in judicial reason, as well as unquestionably taught by the Author of Christianity, it is no wonder that the doctrine of Eternal Retribution, in spite of selfish prejudices and appeals to human sentiment, has always been a belief of Christendom. From theology and philosophy it has passed into human literature, and is wrought into its finest structures. It makes the solid substance of the Iliad and the Greek Drama. It pours a somber light in the brightness and grace of the Æneid. It is the theme of the Inferno, and is presumed by both of the other parts of the Divine Comedy. The Epic of Milton derives from it its awful grandeur. And the greatest of the Shakespearean tragedies sound and stir the depths of the human soul, by the delineation of guilt intrinsic and eternal." [5]

As the evil in sin is twofold, the turning away

3 Australian Messenger, April, 1905, p. 83.
4 Luke XVI, 19-31.
5 Shedd, Doctrine of Endless Punishment, p. 161.

from God and the turning to creatures, so a double punishment is meted out to the sinner in hell, commensurate with his iniquity. The pain of loss, corresponding to the turning away from God, consists in the privation of eternal beatitude; namely, of the beatific vision and of all those goods consequent on it, and which God has prepared for His elect. The pain of sense, corresponding to the turning to creatures, comprises all the physical evil, suffering or grief directly inflicted on the lost.[6]

St. Theresa has left in her notes a vivid portrayal of a vision of hell vouchsafed to her by Almighty God. "He (Our Lord) was pleased that one day, while I was at prayer, I should find myself, without knowing how, in a moment lodged in hell. I understood that Our Lord was pleased to let me see the place which the devils had prepared for me there, and which I had deserved by my sins. This lasted only for a short time; but yet, if I should live many years, it seems impossible to forget such a place. The entrance seemed to be like a long close valley, or rather like a low, dark and narrow oven; and the ground appeared to be like mire, exceedingly filthy, stinking insupportably, and full of a multitude of loathsome vermin. At the end of it there was a certain hollow place, as if it had been a kind of little press in the wall, into which I found myself thrust, and

[6] Mazella, De Deo Creante, Disp. VI, art. 6.

close pent up. All that I have said might pass for delightful, in comparison with what I felt in this press: the torment was so dreadful that no words can express the least part of it."

"I felt a fire in my soul which I cannot express or describe as it was in reality. All those other most grievous torments, almost insupportable, which I have endured, by the shrinking up of all my sinews, and by other ways (which, in the judgment of physicians, were the greatest that could be suffered, in a corporeal way, in this world); and some also, as I have said, which were caused by the devil, were all a mere nothing in comparison with what I suffered there, joined with the dismal thought that all this suffering was to be without end or intermission. And even this is still nothing, if compared with the continual agony the soul suffers; that pressing, that stifling, that anguish so exceedingly sensible, together with such desperate discontent and disgust, that I cannot express it. To say it is a butchering, or rending of the soul, is to say little; for this would seem to express a violence, used by some other agent to destroy her. But here she is her own executioner, and even tears herself in pieces. I saw not who it was that tormented me; but I seemed to find myself both burnt and cut in pieces all at once; and in so dreadful a place there was no room for the least hope of once meeting with any comfort or ease; neither

was there any such thing as sitting or lying down. Thus was I thrust into this place like a hole in the wall; and these walls, which are also most horrible to the sight, press in upon their prisoner, so that everything chokes and stifles there. There is nothing but thick darkness, without the least glimpse of light; and yet, I know not how it is, though there is no light, yet one sees all that can afflict the sight." [7]

The whole doctrine of the torments of hell is briefly summed up in the words of condemnation, that will, according to the testimony of the Divine Word, be pronounced on the last day against the unrepentant sinners: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." [8] Depart from Me, you cursed! Depart from Me, your Lord, your Brother, your God, your Sovereign Good. Depart from Me, who drew you out of nothingness and breathed into your corruptible bodies immortal souls, souls that have in foolish pride thought to cast aside all the obligations that they owe to Me, and have rather chosen the companionship and service of Satan and his demons. Depart from Me, your crucified Redeemer, who have suffered torments indescribable to open to you the gates of paradise close-sealed by sin. Depart from Me, your faithful Shepherd, who, all unmindful of your wanderings, came in quest of the lost sheep

7 Life of Saint Theresa, by herself, C. XXXIII.
8 Matt. XXV, 41.

and vainly strove by countless whisperings of grace to draw you back to My safe fold. Depart from Me, ungrateful ones. Depart, you unsubmissive, rebellious, defiant and impenitent spirits. Depart; never more to gaze upon My countenance, never more to feel the saving influence of that grace which you have thus freely spurned, never more to hope in that boundless mercy which you have so often outraged. Depart from Me, you cursed. Yes, thrice-cursed be you in those bright faculties of soul that constitute the dignity of man, and which you have debased to the level of the beast. Cursed be your memory, condemned to recollections of all that you have lost, of all that you might have done to avert the fearful doom that has come upon you. Cursed be your intelligence, destined at birth to know your God and all His attributes, now darkened by sin, and shrouded in gloom, yearning for that which it can never know, loathing to harbor the maddening thoughts which drive you to despair. Cursed be your free will, that priceless gift which might have given Me the greatest glory that created service can attain, but is now forever doomed to frenzied hatred, to hatred insatiable against your God, against your fellow men, against yourself. Nor faculties of soul alone, but let your bodies also be accursed, your pampered bodies; henceforth let them writhe in torment, distorted and disfigured by the eternal flames prepared for Satan and his angels; it is

to them that you are given; their lot henceforth must be your lot. The choice that you have made on earth, let it remain for all eternity.

After the Jamaican earthquake, the insidious rays of the tropical sun searched the ruin heaps of devastated Kingston, and quickly brought corruption on the mangled corpses. For a time some pretense was made at burial, and the disfigured remains were cast indiscriminately into long trenches dug in the open fields. After a while, to avert pestilence, even this crude burial had to be denied, and so, as the charred and putrefying bodies of man and beast alike were dragged from out the smoldering débris, they were piled in heaps along the streets. Oil and turpentine were poured over them, and the torch was applied. At first appeared a glint of light, and then a ruddy flame, that quickly turned to a murky, angry glare, as sputtered and crackled the writhing victims in each ghastly pyre.

A witness of the scene of destruction thus describes his impressions. "I stood there by night and gazed over the doomed city, lighted solely by these burning bodies and the smoldering glow of the recent conflagration. Oh, the odor of that sizzling flesh! It stifled; nay, it

sickened unto death. Weary and faint at heart, my gaze became transfixed on that brownish cloud that collected as a funeral pall over the scene of desolation and obscured the vision of those gruesome fires. Back through the centuries of time I passed in spirit, until I stood at Nero's side and watched the torches of resin-wrapped human forms lighting the streets of Rome. But, oh, how different the scene before me! Here is no martyr band hastening to place their palms of victory at the foot of the fair white throne of the Triune God. No, these unfortunate victims were, for the most part, in all probability cut off in sin, without a moment in which to make their peace with God. I approached one of the largest of the fires, down by the Docks. As a passing quake shook down the pile, there at the bottom was the form of a boy, a lad of some fourteen years, frail, delicate, half-clad, an ugly gash across the face. Even as I looked, the figure began to writhe and squirm as if in agony. Shrinking back in horror, I cried aloud: Surely they have not cast a living child among the dead? No, it was merely the contraction of the sinews and the muscles as the flames ate through the flesh. And then I asked myself: Where now is that boy's soul? If he has died with but a

> single mortal sin unconfessed, unrepented, that boy's soul is lost in hell. And if in hell, it would esteem it a miracle of Divine Mercy, to be allowed to crawl back from out the fiery depths into the body that was once companion of its guilt, to spend an eternity in the very midst of the sputtering, hissing pyre, beneath the mass of sizzling putrefaction."

Is there any death more dreaded than that by fire? To escape the advancing flame, man will leap from great heights to his certain doom, or cast himself headlong into the sea to drown. If, then, we shrink from the slightest touch of the earthly fire, given as it was to man as a priceless gift by his loving and provident Maker, what must be the torment of the fire of hell, that was kindled by the breath of an angry God, expressly as an instrument of torture, to vindicate His outraged majesty?

Twenty miles down through the earth's crust, the temperature reaches 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. Yet this cannot be hell. Thirty miles further down, it exceeds 4000 degrees, and yet not hell. At the earth's center, it may be 25,000 degrees, or more. Yet even this cannot compare with the fire of hell, which penetrates not only every pore and fiber of the sinful body, but permeates the very soul as well. Nor does it ever consume its victims, while it continues with unremitting fierceness for all eternity.

After the earthquake at Messina in December, 1908, the ravenous dogs that prowled about the ruins constituted one of the greatest dangers to the refugees. Starving, and often rabid through want of water, they gnawed the dead bodies like hyenas, and frequently attacked even the living, who with difficulty drove them away. One young man was buried in débris up to his neck, and while thus unable to defend himself, was attacked by three ferocious animals. His eyes and right cheek were seriously torn, before his cries attracted help.[9] It will be useless to cry for help, when one is buried in the abyss of hell, and becomes the victim of the attack, not of dogs, but of countless demons, who are exercising cunning ingenuity to torture soul as well as body.

Chaplain Doyle, writing from the battlefield of Loos, remarks: "As I walked along, I wondered had they made certain each man was really dead. One poor fellow had been buried, surely, before the breath had left his body, for there was every sign of a last struggle and one arm was thrust out from its shroud of clay." [10] What of the last conscious moment of the poor unfortunate? What of the never-ending cen-

9 Baltimore Sun, Jan. 7, 1909, p. 2.
10 O'Rahilly, Father William Doyle, S.J., p. 229.

turies of the conscious soul, that is buried alive in hell?

Let us now pause for a moment and consider the particular torture in store for those who fall into hell after having played the devil's part in the destruction of other souls. We may only touch on the subject in passing. To dwell on it might drive us to despair. If we have scandalized another, God still gives us the opportunity for repentance, perhaps denied our victim. Let the realization of the natural consequences of our act nerve us to greater effort to guard ourselves against future falls.

The Emperor Constans II was insanely jealous of his younger brother Theodosius. Fearing a rival for his throne, he forced him to receive Holy Order and to enter a monastery. The suspicious monarch still feared the young prince, who had laid aside all earthly ambition, and had him assassinated in 659, one month after having received communion from the hand of his unfortunate victim. Thereafter, the Emperor's dreams were haunted by the bloody specter of the murdered Prince. In one hand it bore a flaming brand, in the other, a chalice filled with blood; the specter held it out to the murderer's lips exclaiming: "Drink, Cain!" [11] What weird torment, then, will be the fate of him who becomes the murderer of another's soul? Not an idle specter of the night, the product of an unbalanced mind, but the unfor-

11 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. III, p. 45.

tunate one himself, turned into a demon, for all eternity will torture and curse the author of his ruin.

A poet has described the terrible punishment of being bound face to face, mouth to mouth, with a putrefying corpse. I shudder in horror, when I imagine myself subjected to such a torment, every gasp drawing in the dread infection from out that mass of putrefaction. The worms give up their present victim to crawl out upon my own body, and they begin to gnaw down into my living flesh. My lips and face, already catching the contagion, commence to fester and decay. I feel the ulcerous sores breaking out on every quivering spot that touches the hideous corpse. They have cast us out into a wild and desolate spot, and the deepest night has come down on us. A phosphorescence exuding from the ghastly form only excites the more the terrors of the imagination. I open my mouth to cry aloud in horror, but those fetid lips pressed close to mine fall away in rottenness, and a mass of putrid matter fills my mouth and chokes my voice. To such an unfortunate, death would come as a priceless boon. Yet in hell, there will be no death, when the poor soul is bound for all eternity to a putrid body, the worm

of conscience gnawing deep, and the soul itself breathing forth the stench of countless sins, and sharing in the burnings of the body.

How terrible, then, the fate of one who goes before his God with mortal sin upon his soul? If the sight of a single writhing corpse in a funeral pyre makes us shrink back in horror, how can we stand the spectacle of countless living forms bathed in molten fire, all conscious of their undying fate? If the cry of a little child in the agony of death brings the cold damp to the brow, how can we endure for untold ages the shrieks of countless little ones hurled into hell, perhaps by our example? If the thought of being bound to a putrefying corpse fills us with revulsion of spirit, how can we endure being cast into the charnel pit and smothered beneath the filth of quivering, decaying human bodies, where the process of decay endures for ever? If the odor of burning flesh nauseates and overcomes us, how shall we bear up in that foul atmosphere, where all the filth of soul pours out a stench that dominates even the effluvia of corrupting bodies; the wormwood of remorse galling our sensual palates; the worm of conscience gnawing unceasingly; while every sense

and faculty finds its own peculiar excruciating torment?

And all for eternity! Endless years of torture! Countless centuries of deathless death! An eternity of torment is an awful thought. In vain do our poor human minds grapple with the concept. In vain do we strive to picture to ourselves millions on millions of years; we have not advanced a single step, eternity is all before. An enduring, unchangeable present, this is all that we can conceive, and we are still far from the reality.

Tell me, those of you who, stricken down with fever, have experienced the tedious watches of the night, have you not tossed upon a bed of pain, with weary yearning for the morrow's light? Have you not been all but driven mad by the overpowering stillness, broken in upon by the monotonous ticking of the clock, that counted off the seconds, minutes, and even the seemingly interminable hours, until the very brain throbbed with the incessant tick, tock, tick, tock? How impenetrable was the darkness! How your excited imagination conjured from out the wall of gloom weird, ghost-like shapes, that flitted and changed until your fevered fancy, in a maddening whirl, almost drove you to despair! Or, perhaps, a gentle sighing of the breeze was to you an unearthly terror, that echoed and reëchoed

through your troubled brain long after the breeze itself had sunk to rest, and caused you to shrink back in abject terror from some fancied peril, which seemed not of this world, but rather a mysterious, uncanny something of the grave! How you sighed for the first faint streaks of dawn to dispel the phantom! How you yearned for the sound of a passing step! The nearness of even a stranger is a solace at such a moment. How you felt impelled to cry aloud to break the deathlike silence, but feared the sepulchral echoes of your own voice! How would you have endured this agony, if you were forced to wait not minutes but years, not hours but centuries? The mere anticipation would drive one mad. What, then, must be the eternity of hell? For, when time is at an end, eternity will still be only beginning, the clock of conscience counting off the never-ending centuries of eternity, with its forever! forever!! forever!!! If a few brief hours can prove so wearisome to the fever-stricken sufferer, what must the eternal ages be to one whose every pore is breathing forth fierce unrelenting flames?

Come now to the brink of hell, and gaze down into the fiery depths, and mark the very spot therein that you have prepared for yourself by sin. Behold that great sea of molten, seething fire, whence rise the overpowering fumes of sulphur and brimstone, the nauseating odor of burning flesh and of souls reeking with

the iniquities of a lifetime. Hearken to those cries of pain and terror, curses, imprecations, blasphemies in wild despair. Extend your hand, and let the fiery breath from out that furnace shrivel and consume its flesh and sinew, until it calcines the bone itself to arid dust. Gaze down there into hell, and see those countless forms of men, writhing and squirming in an agony of pain. Look into the hideous, distorted faces, and answer the question: Why is it that I am not there myself paying the price of sin? Why is it? Withdraw your gaze from that infernal scene, and turn your eyes to cross-surmounted Golgotha. See there your crucified Redeemer. The reason that you have been spared, is once again the secret of Calvary. The dying Christ would draw you to Himself. He still vouchsafes the time to make your peace with Him. He still is ready to flood your soul with grace, to start your life anew. He still but asks to *Keep the Gate* with you.

Protestant divines who accept the doctrine of eternal punishment, are deeply moved by the thought of Christ, the vicarious victim for sin, ransoming us from hell by the price of Calvary. Listen once more to Doctor Shedd. "Over against God's infinite antagonism and righteous severity toward moral evil, there stands God's infinite pity and desire to forgive. This is realized not by the high-handed and unprincipled method of pardoning without legal satisfaction of any kind, but by the strange and

stupendous method of putting the Eternal Judge in the place of the human criminal; of substituting God's own satisfaction for that due from man. In this vicarious atonement for sin, the Triune God relinquishes no claims of law, and waives no rights of justice. The sinner's Divine Substitute, in His hour of voluntary agony and death, drinks the cup of punitive and inexorable justice to the dregs." [12]

Here is the reason why you have not already paid the price of sin. The prayer of Calvary has been heard. The Heavenly Father has hearkened to the pleading of the Christ, who thirsts for souls even as He hangs on the rough wood of the cross. Your soul was one of those chosen in that hour of agony by the dying Saviour, and He has preserved you that you may begin your life anew.

No matter what the iniquity of the past, do not abandon hope, do not give up the fight as lost. The greatest proof of Christ's all-conquering love for you, is that He has thus far protected you from the dreadful consequences of your sins. His mercy has spared you in the past. His all-abundant grace will preserve you in the future, if you but do your part. But should the hour ever come, when love and gratitude fail to hold you faithful to your present purpose of amendment, then let the thought of hell and all its fearful torments prevent your lapsing into evil ways.

12 Shedd, The Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment, p. 162.

Toil, then, up the Calvary of penitence. Sin-burdened and weary, turn to Him, who alone can bring peace and calm into your life. Seek true solace and consolation where alone you can obtain it. In sorrow and contrition, follow the penitent Magdalen up the steep ascent, until step by step grace leads you to the very feet of the dying Christ, where the loving eyes may hold you safe from the dread torments of hell, and help you once again to *Keep the Gate.*

* * *

PRAYER

God, who didst subdue the flames of fire for the three children, mercifully grant that the flames of our sins may not consume us, Thy servants.[13]

Of Thy loving kindness pour Thy grace into our hearts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that, curbing our sinful propensities with voluntary chastisement, we may suffer in this life and not be condemned to eternal punishments.[14]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 6

13 Prayer of Mass, Saturday in Ember Week of Advent.
14 Prayer of Mass, Friday in Passion Week.

CHAPTER V

The Idol Shattered

Assemble yourselves together; be gathered together, O nation not worthy to be loved: before the decree bring forth the day as dust passing away; before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; before the day of the Lord's indignation come upon you.
(SOPHON. II, 1, 2.)

WHEN the horrible sacrifices of innocent babes in the Vale of Hinnom was at its height, the Lord raised up the pious King Josias. "And in the eighteenth year of king Josias, the king sent Saphan the son of Assia, the son of Messulam, the scribe of the temple of the Lord, saying to him: Go to Helcias the high priest, that the money may be put together which is brought into the temple of the Lord, which the doorkeepers of the temple have gathered of the people. And let it be given to the workmen by the overseers of the house of the Lord; and let them distribute it to those that work in the temple of the Lord, to repair the temple." [1]

When the Temple had been purged of its golden store, in the recesses of God's House was found the book of the law written by the

[1] 4 Kings XXII, 3-5.

hand of Moses. According to Josephus, the sacred book was discovered in the very treasure-room itself.[2] In all probability it had been concealed there by some priest, at the time that the impious Achaz was devoting to the flames all copies of the sacred writings on which he could lay hands, that they might not be quoted against his idolatry and other crimes. Before long, the very existence of the scroll, which was probably buried beneath the accumulation of treasure, was forgotten even by the keepers of the Temple.

"And Helcias the high priest said to Saphan the scribe: I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Helcias gave the book to Saphan, and he read it. . . . And Saphan the scribe told the king, saying: Helcias the priest hath delivered to me a book. And when Saphan had read it before the king, and the king had heard the words of the law of the Lord, he rent his garments." [3]

Within our souls, the living temples of the Holy Ghost, weather-beaten though they are, and wretched ruins of former splendor, the word of God, the voice of conscience, still lies concealed, buried beneath the accumulation of sinful pleasure. If we but purge the temple, Heaven's precious gift will again be brought to light. We have lost sight of it for a time in our mad quest for wealth or pleasure. We sought

2 Lapide, Comm. in Lib. 4 Reg. XXII.
3 4 Kings XXII, 8, 10, 11.

to serve God and Mammon. We thought to keep Christ and Satan in the same temple. It was then that the Prophet Sophonias arose with a final cry of warning and rebuke, predicting the dreadful punishments that were impending and the city's desolation. "Assemble yourselves together; be gathered together, O nation not worthy to be loved: before the decree bring forth the day as dust passing away; before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you; before the day of the Lord's indignation come upon you." [4] This was shortly before the Babylonian captivity.

Juda stood aghast at the fiery denunciations. The idols in the Temple courts were beaten to dust and cast into the Cedron. The figure of Moloch in the Vale of Hinnom was cast down and the valley itself so defiled as to preclude its future use for sacrilegious sacrifice. Then, after generations of infidelity, the nation for a time returned to the worship of the true God.

"And the king commanded Helcias the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to cast out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that had been made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burnt them without Jerusalem in the valley of Cedron; and he carried the ashes of them to Bethel. . . . He destroyed also the pavilions of the effeminate, which were in the house of the Lord, for which the women

[4] Sophon. II, 1, 2.

wove as it were little dwellings for the grove. . . . And the altars which Manasses had made in the two courts of the temple of the Lord, the king broke down: and he ran from thence, and cast the ashes of them into the torrent Cedron." [5]

Juda quickly relapsed into idolatry after the death of Josias. "And the people of the land took Joachaz the son of Josias: and they anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead. . . . And he did evil before the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done." [6]

Actuated perhaps by fear of Josias, many had externally conformed to the precept of the king, appearing in Jerusalem to take part in the restored worship of the true God, while in secret they preserved the shrines of their idols. "However the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem; but only ate of the unleavened bread among the brethren." [7] They had sought to serve their God and Satan at the same time. They thought to combine the rites of religion with the guilty quest of pleasure and licentiousness. They would ask Almighty God to share at least the outer courts of the Temple with the graven image of idolatry.

How frequently it happens, that man purifies his soul from sin, and for a time returns to the service of God, only to fall back again into

5 4 Kings xxiii, 4, 7, 12.
6 Ibid., 30, 32.
7 Ibid., 9.

his former evil ways? Why is it? Simply because he seeks to compromise with God. Externally he satisfies the precepts of religion or his state of life, but in the secret of his heart are hidden longings, only half restrained, to bring back the banished idols.

This is especially true of the great curse of fallen nature. Slavery to the demon of impurity is repeatedly referred to in Holy Writ as idolatry. It is the worship of the idol of shameless sin; the real enshrining of Satan in the temple of the soul in place of the banished Christ; the most pleasing holocaust of self that can be made to the prince of darkness. Truly this is idolatry in its most repulsive and degrading form. It blunts the sting of conscience, until its victim becomes a scoffer at the most sacred precepts of religion, and even at religion itself. Obligations to God are lost sight of, and there is no longer any realization of the need of such a Being in existence. Sinful pleasure becomes the one aim of life; its fulfilment, the gratification of every disgusting lust and loathsome tendency. The wild beast of the forest knows when he has gratified the cravings of his grosser passions. Our idolater degrades himself below the level of the brute, and outrages the restraining warnings of nature, until reason itself breaks under the strain, leaving of a sudden a dribbling idiot or a raving maniac. Such is the fate of the man, who, even in secret, clings to the idol of impurity.

THE IDOL SHATTERED

When the Ark of the Covenant was placed by the Philistines in the temple of Dagon at Azotus, the idol was found next morning prostrate on the ground. Replaced upon the pedestal, the following night it was again hurled down by unseen force and shattered beside the Ark. "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the temple of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when the Azotians arose early the next day, behold, Dagon lay upon his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord: and they took Dagon and set him up again in his place. And the next day again, when they rose in the morning, they found Dagon lying upon his face on the earth before the ark of the Lord: and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold: and only the stump of Dagon remained in its place." [8]

At the summons of the angel, Joseph arose by night and took the Child and His Mother and fled into Egypt. Their arrival at Heliopolis, tradition relates, caused all the idols to fall to the ground, literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaias, that the idols of Egypt should be moved at the presence of the Lord. "The burden of Egypt:" cries the prophet, "Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof." [9]

8 1 Kings v, 2-5. 9 Is. xix, 1.

Divine Goodness has formed but one enmity, but that is an irreconcilable one. The curse of the Godhead on the serpent in the Garden of Eden decreed an everlasting antagonism between the Messias and the tempter.[10] Useless, then, to try to enshrine them in a common temple. Neither can you darken the vestibule with Satan and keep Christ within the sanctuary. You cannot enshrine Lucifer beneath the shadow of the cross, angelic hosts will bear the cross away. It must be Satan or Christ. Satan and Christ is an impossibility. Where Christ dwells, the idols fall shattered. The idols stand, because Christ has been cast out of His own Sanctuary to make room for them.

Compromise is the spirit of the worldlywise. Experts at driving hard bargains with the neighbor, they feel that God should rest satisfied with a divided service.

Alexander Severus, Roman Emperor from 222 to 235, placed in his oratory, beside the statues of Orpheus and Apollonius, those of Moses and Christ, and is said to have contemplated building a temple in honor of the latter. The words of Our Lord, "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them," [11] made so deep an impression on his mind, that he adopted them as a rule of conduct for himself, and had them engraved upon the entrance of his palace and other public

10 Montford, True Devotion to Mary, p. 31.
11 Matt. VII, 12.

buildings.[12] His mother Mammæa had been drawn to Christianity by the lectures of his tutor Origen. Darras [13] states, that he rendered divine honors to Christ, and proposed to the Senate to admit to a rank among the gods the founder of a religion whose morals were so pure. The Senate consulted the oracles. Their response was, that if this new apotheosis were to be celebrated, the temples would soon be abandoned and all the world become Christian. This Roman pagan was but precursor of our modern slave of sin, who divides his service between his pleasure and a jealous God.

Constantine, the hero of the Milvian Bridge, although establishing Christianity as the dominant religion of the Empire, was forced as a punishment for a like compromise, to remain a catechumen till under the shadow of death, when the saving waters of Baptism purged away the effects of servitude to his passions and a life of compromise.[14]

King Agrippa, listening to the burning words of St. Paul, exclaimed: "In a little, thou persuadest me to become a Christian." [15] In a little? Yes, O King Agrippa! If the Christ will come to your terms. If He will sanction your unbridled passions, then will you compromise with Him. Christ did not compromise, nor will He compromise to-day.

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12 Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. I, no. 67.
13 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. I, p. 205.
14 Guggenberger, General History, I, no. 39.
15 Acts xxvi, 28.

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Saphira his wife, sold a piece of land, and by fraud kept part of the price of the land, his wife being privy thereto; and bringing a certain part of it, laid it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said: Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? And after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost." [16] The same fate befell Saphira, as she would repeat the lie. They had hoped to effect a compromise with God, and God struck them dead on the spot. He spares us for a time, but the dreadful day of reckoning is in store for each and every soul. The sun will one morn rise for the last time on our iniquity; the morrow's light will find this pampered body of ours a repulsive, putrefying corpse. Do we ever seriously pause in our work of compromise, and repeat slowly to ourselves the words?—"I must die! I must die!! Perhaps to-day!!!"

Statisticians compute the number of deaths per day at about 145,000. That means, a hundred die every minute of the day. One for each ticking of the clock.[17] At what minute shall I

16 Acts v, 1-5.
17 French Messenger of the Sacred Heart, Nov., 1905, p. 686.

be a unit to make up the necessary hundred? At what tick of the clock shall I be summoned to give an account of my life of compromise? Life is at best uncertain. The daily record of accidents and loss of life shows how we carry our lives in our hands at every step we take. The germ-ladened air, that we are forced to breathe, at every breath holds out its own peculiar dangers. The delicate mechanism of this intricate composite of soul and body each day encounters innumerable causes that threaten its disintegration.

We are told that Patrick Henry, whose brilliant eloquence played an important part in the early history of our nation, when dying, turned to those about him, and, pointing to the Bible, exclaimed: "Here is a book, worth more than all the others ever printed, yet it is my misfortune never to have found time to read it. I trust in the mercy of God, but I fear it is now too late." [18] This Virginian orator is but a type of the man of to-day, who is so engrossed with worldly cares, that the hour of death creeps upon him and takes him in his compromise unprepared.

How different the example of Father Morris, the English Jesuit, who stood in his pulpit, preaching on the words of the Gospel: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." Hearing the death angel's summons in the very midst of his

18 Pittsburg Despatch.

discourse, he paused for an instant. A smile lit up his face. Slowly he repeated the words of his text, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," swayed for an instant, clutched at the sides of the pulpit, and with the smile still lighting up his countenance, concluded, "and — to — God — the — things — that — are — God's," as he sank back into the arms of one who had hastened to his assistance. And without another word, he forthwith rendered to God the pure soul that belonged to God. In that man's life, there had been no compromise.

Contrast the beauty and calm of this saintly end of a life of generosity and zeal with the following terrible struggle, described to us by the priest who witnessed it. It is not a fancy from out the realm of fiction, but an incident from actual life. Listen to the narrator's words.

"It was during the Summer of 1908, that I was called to attend a young man of twenty-four, in a large public hospital. The record of the case showed that his condition was due to the immoral life he had been leading. As I approached him, he seemed in black despair. 'Father, what is the use of wasting your time and mine? I'm damned. I know it, and I deserve it.' Day after day, I returned to him, and strove to reason with him, and held out the infinite mercy of God. It was always the same story, as the life forces were slowly consumed

by the burning fever. 'Father, God knows more about it than you do. He tells me that I am damned, and I know that I deserve it.' I used to sit on the side of his bed, and with my left hand stroke the fevered forehead, thus trying in vain to calm and quiet him. There was a wild, almost demoniacal look in the eyes, that made me uneasy. One day, on entering the ward, I kept my right hand in my pocket, clasping a little medal of St. Benedict, which I purposed to slip under his pillow unobserved. Not a word would the boy speak, as he lay there glaring at me. At the first movement of my hand, however, to bring the medal out of my pocket, although he could have no reason for suspecting the presence of the medal, he sprang up and then crouched like an animal in the bed, trembling from head to foot, and cried aloud: 'Father, take that medal away. Don't bring it near me. You'll only offend God if you do. I'm damned. I know it, and I deserve it.' And with that cry of blank despair upon his lips, he died before my eyes."

The writer continues, and the new scene he sets before us forms a striking contrast with the foregoing. "The following Spring, while stationed in Boston, I was summoned to the bedside of a young Cuban, who was dying. He had left his home and friends to perfect his education, and was about to graduate from a school of oratory. He had caught cold in church, the preceding Sunday. Compound

pneumonia had set in, and the lungs had already burst. The physical suffering was intense, yet I found him enduring an even greater torture of soul. In fact, he seemed to be contending with the devil in visible form, shouting: 'Go away. I'll not do it. I'll not do it.' From the moment of communion, however, a perfect peace and calm entered his soul. I obtained his mother's address, and at once cabled to her, that her boy was dying. I then returned to take that mother's place by the side of the patient sufferer. He was now entering his agony. His mind was perfectly clear, and the same peaceful calm with absolute resignation possessed his soul. I marveled much at this, until I found hanging by the bed a silver medal, that told the secret of that boy's life. I took the medal in my hand. On one side was the image of Mary Immaculate; on the other, the heads of three boy saints, and the inscription showed that my new-found friend had been a sodalist in the Jesuit College of his native city, far across the seas. Faithful to Mary in sodality days, he had been faithful to her until death, guarding the medal all those years, and preserving it for the day when he might press it to his dying lips, and reap the bountiful harvest of all the good works he had performed in Mary's honor during those happy innocent days of college life. I placed the medal in his hand, purposing to send it on the morrow to his mother with his beads, which from the begin-

ning he had twined around his wrist. At about a quarter past eleven, his face brightened. He called to some one. To the nurse who leaned over him, I whispered: 'He is talking Spanish.' I had failed to catch his words. 'No, Father,' he exclaimed, 'I am not speaking Spanish. I'm speaking English. Do you not see her, Father? There she is. There! Right there! Mother! Mother!' And so he chatted on for several minutes longer. Was it a fevered image of that earthly mother, who even at that moment was telling her beads in her distant oratory for her dying boy; or had his Heavenly Mother hastened down to earth, to cheer the dying hour of her faithful sodalist, I know not, but this I do know, that as I sank upon my knees in reverential awe, I felt that I was being allowed to assist at the deathbed of one of God's chosen souls. He was silent again, and struggling, oh, so feebly. 'Henry boy, do you know me?' I whispered. 'Yes, Father.' 'Everything all right?' 'Yes, Father. I'm contented. My Jes-us mer-cy.' The light faded from his eyes, which were now fixed and glistening. Even as I repeated the words: 'Go forth, departing soul,' there was a convulsive gasp, and Mary had welcomed home her faithful sodalist. The nurse, a Protestant, fell on her knees beside the bed, and with tears in her eyes, exclaimed: 'Oh, if I could only believe as he believed.' And I left the silent form there on the bed, my own spirit chastened and humbled, the publican's

prayer upon my lips, 'O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.' "

Contrast for an instant the closing hours of these two young men. In all probability, they had entered on the struggle of life with equal chances. Devoted parents had bestowed on them the same opportunities of education and advancement. Good, wholesome companionship had marked alike their early days. Yet with the advance of time, the one sacrificed himself to his passions and sinful pleasure; the other, exposed to the same dangers and temptations, had safeguarded himself in the struggle against evil, by employing the means extended to him by his religion. As we live, so must we expect to die. God may, in the last moment of life, by a miracle of grace, overcome the resistance of the sinner, but the deathbed conversion is a rare exception to the rule, vouchsafed at times by an omnipotent and merciful God, to save us from despair.

Twenty-five years after the death of Constantine, his nephew Julian became sole ruler of the Empire. Baptized and brought up a Christian, he had secretly apostatized in his early youth, and now openly avowed his infidelity. To render void the prophecy of Christ, he summoned the Jews to the rebuilding of the Temple of Sion. Gladly the Children of Israel flocked to their ancient city from every part of the Empire, offering their treasures, and aiding in the work. But even as the workmen

cleared the space, to recommence the building, when literally not a stone was left upon a stone, flames burst forth from the ground, destroying alike the workers and their work.[19] Unchecked by this warning from Heaven, Julian the Apostate continued his mad persecution of the Christ, until struck down by a javelin in his battle with the Persians, as Theodoret tells us, he filled his hand with the blood that gushed from the gaping wound in his side, and hurling it against the heavens, cried out in black despair: "Galilean, Thou hast conquered." [20]

Effect what compromise we may, the day will come, when we too must make the dread acknowledgment: "Galilean, Thou hast conquered." Though the sanctuary may now be vacant of its God, though we may have long since betrayed the gate, though our souls may have become the shrines of Satan and our passions; there still is time to cast out the prince of darkness, there still is time to redeem our trust and *Keep the Gate* aright, there still is time to bring back the banished Christ into the possession of His own. Then, when the cry of "Galilean, Thou hast conquered," rings out at the death summons, it will be a cry, not of terror, but of joy; not of defeat, but of victory. Galilean, Thou hast conquered. Thou hast conquered my heart, my affections, my love. Thou hast led me captive by Thy grace. Thou hast

19 Guggenberger, General History, I, no. 41.
20 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. I, p. 497.

imprisoned me in Thine own Sacred Heart. Thou hast chained me in the dungeons of Thy love. Thou hast conquered, Galilean, Thou hast conquered. But I have conquered with Thee. Together we have *Kept the Gate*. Into Thy hands, O God, I commend my spirit.

* * *

PRAYER

Almighty and merciful God, who hast given to mankind both the remedies of salvation and the rewards of eternal life, look mercifully upon us Thy servants, and cherish the souls Thou hast created, that in the hour of their going forth they may be found worthy to be presented without stain of sin to Thee their Creator, by the hands of the holy angels.[21]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book I, Chapter 23
" III, " 12
" III, " 26

21 Prayer of Mass to Beg the Grace of a Happy Death.

CHAPTER VI

Despair of the Idolater

Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear; for I am afraid of thy judgments.
(Ps. CXVIII, 120.)

ONLY a few years ago, a strange scene was enacted in France. A great statesman was dead. During the silent watches of the night, two veiled figures knelt alone and prayed beside the shrouded form. This was the last chapter in the sad life-story of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, the author of the proscriptive law against Religious Orders. Before his death, he had been reconciled to God by one of the very Religious who had been the victims of his persecution, while these two nuns, whom he had deprived of home and country, knelt there throughout the night, begging God's mercy on his soul.

M. Waldeck-Rousseau, in the height of power, had played no mean part in the direction of a nation's policy. To satisfy ambition, he had bartered his conscience, his honor, his religion, his God. Dazzled by the tinsel-splendor of worldly greatness, he had become blind to all else, and was found the ready instrument of

the enemies of the Church, in their schemes of persecution and repression.

Within a few short months, the great statesman had fallen from power. Broken and dispirited, he was deserted by the obsequious followers of yesterday. Adversity had tried the friendship of those who had formerly clung to him, and one and all they had proved but parasites.

As his weary sin-burdened soul learned wisdom amid the bitter humiliations of his fall, through the gentle charity and forgiving Christ-like spirit of the good Sisters whom he had sacrificed to masonic hate, he was drawn back from his wanderings to the innocence of childhood days. His troubled conscience regained its calm. The outraged Church received again with open arms her wayward child. The Good Shepherd had led the lost sheep back to the fold.[1]

Thus it came to pass, that at his death, the fallen Premier of France was ignored by those with whom he had shared his greatness. His only mourners were the victims of his suicidal ambition, the Religious whom he had in an ill-advised hour rendered homeless outcasts, his fellow countrymen whom he had left as wandering exiles barred from their native land, his coreligionists whom he had placed under the ban of the State.

As our Divine Saviour approached the Holy

1 The Messenger, Sept., 1904, p. 336.

City on the first Palm Sunday morning, the glad acclaim of all that throng saluting Him as the Promised One of Israel, awakened no ambitious thoughts within His mind. He watched unmoved the waving branches plucked from the palms that grew in clusters by the way. No flush of pride suffused His cheek, as He rode across the garments strewn by the multitude along the path. He was not deceived by this sudden outburst of rejoicing and enthusiasm. He knew, alas too well, the temper of His people Israel. Changeable, capricious, fickle, they had shown themselves during their wanderings in the wilderness, when dependent on the Heaven-sent manna for their nourishment. Ungrateful, rebellious, nay, idolatrous, they had become, when once He had installed them in the Promised Land, and destroyed their enemies from before their face. Carnal-minded seekers of self, they had distorted the meaning of the Messianic Kingdom, losing sight of its spiritual signification, and substituting for the same a universal rule over the nations of this world, whereby the gold of all the earth should flow in tribute to the restored Kingdom of Juda.

Scarcely a year ago, up in Galilee, when by miraculous power He had fed the thousands on a few chance loaves and fishes, they had sought, with impetuous frenzy, to proclaim Him as their King, and they might have had their way, had He proven faithless to His Mission among men and accommodated Himself to their per-

verted notions. But on the morrow, when He declared the true significance of the Messianic Hopes, when He disclosed to them the Eucharistic Manna that they must eat if they would nourish their poor, famished souls while wandering in the cruel desert of life, the saying seemed to them too hard, and they could not believe it. They sought the Christ, oh, yes, but the Christ in power, the Christ who fed the multitudes, the Christ whose word commanded the forces of nature. They were not prepared to accept the Christ who would abase Himself, the Christ who would become Himself the food for hungry souls, that He might strengthen them to *Keep the Gate.* And so it came to pass, that many of them walked with Him no more.

"Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." [2] Such is the cry to-day, as Christ descends the Mount of Olives. A turn in the road, and the city lies before Him. A broad and beautiful city it is, in truth, a city of costly buildings and cedar-covered palaces. Its lofty battlements with their countless, seemingly impregnable, towers, give it the appearance of an immense natural fortress. But above all, there in the foreground, rises Mount Moria, unsurpassed in grandeur and beauty. Terrace on terrace its courts ascend, and crowning all, the holy Temple stands high above the city. Surrounded by innumerable pillars and

2 Matt. xxi, 9.

colonnades of richest marble, its gold-sheathed walls glow like a molten sea of fire, in the full effulgence of the morning sun. Overawed by the surpassing beauty of the spectacle, the excited multitude may have paused for an instant in the glad pæan of praise and exultation. Yet, it was at this very moment, that, as St. Luke tells us, "When he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it." [3]

The Saviour weeping! And at such a time as this! Weeping in the hour of His triumphal procession, and when He is proclaimed on every hand as the long-expected Messias! No ordinary anguish can make a strong man weep. No passing sorrow can wring from the eyes of hardy manhood the tear of pity. It is no momentary weakness that has thus seemingly unmanned the Christ. Gazing upon the proud and haughty city, He sees with prophetic vision the consummation of the nation's sacrilege, and the terrible expiation that will be demanded of the children of those deicides, on whom must fall the blood of the Rejected of Israel.

Already has the council of the nation, in the name of Sion, renounced their God and King, lest the Roman come and take away their place and nation. In a few short days, many of the very voices that now acclaim Him king, with even greater earnestness will cry aloud: "Away with Him! Away with Him! We have no king but Cæsar." Before this week has run its

[3] Luke xix, 41.

course, many of those hands that bear aloft the waving branches, having felt the touch of the briber's gold, will clench in hate and clutch the air in frenzied deprecation before the Roman Governor to work His doom.

So it is, that the grandeur of the Temple Mount is lost upon Him. That glittering mass of marble and priceless gold stays not His vision, but far beyond to the westward He turns His eyes, and fixes them on that skull-shaped hill, three crosses standing there against a wall of gloom.

The vision changes. The day of expiation is dawning now before Him. The city of palaces and mighty battlements trembles before His gaze, and then lies prostrate in the dust. He beholds the Roman legions, resting upon the very spot where now He stands. He sees the ponderous engines of war, to the right hand and to the left, hurling gigantic missiles, that cause the lofty towers to totter and then crumble into shapeless ruins. He hears the shrieks and cries of the beleaguered town, where famine and dissensions are working greater havoc than the Roman swords. He hears the little children pleading, oh, so pitifully, not for bread but for their very lives, as heartless and unnatural mothers, to satisfy their own cravings of hunger, prepare to eat the tender flesh of their suckling babes. He hears the final blood-curdling cry of blank despair, as the Temple of Sion bursts forth in flames, and Jerusalem, the

forsaken of God, is blotted out from the book of nations. And so it is the Master weeps.

He, the victim of His people's greed for worldly power, mourns over the fallen city. He, the Outcast of Israel; He, who has not whereon to lay His weary head; He, who in death will be denied by earth so much as a spot whereon to die; He, who must needs be dependent on the charity of others for the very winding-sheet that His mangled body will claim for burial, still sheds the tears of pity over prostrate Sion, laid low by the very hand of Rome, whom she had sought to propitiate by proving traitor to her God.

Down through the ages of time He gazes, and beholds every temple of the soul desecrated by the idol of sin enshrined in the place of the Triune God, every tabernacle of the Most High laid waste by sin, every life of compromise consummated in total surrender to the archfiend, to win whose favor man has proved traitor to his God and Maker. Well may the Master weep!

Those poor nuns in the death chamber at Paris could pay the last sad rites of charity to the fallen but repentant assailer of their liberties. But, what must have been the anguish of that tender, loving Heart Divine, to know that His tears were shed in vain over a fallen but impenitent people; to realize, that for the great majority of those unfortunates He was to tread the dolorous way in vain; to have the

painful truth stand out before Him in sharp definition, that other cities and other nations to the end of time would rival Israel in iniquity and crime; that countless chosen temples sanctified with His blood would be given over to the worship of the prince of darkness; that men unmindful of their sacred obligation to guard the sanctuary of the soul for Him, would banish Him from out their lives, and enshrine their passions in His stead. Bitter, indeed, must be the tears of the weeping Christ!

But, oh, the greatest anguish of all was, perhaps, the clear appreciation of the fact that the day is fixed from all eternity, when He will return again to Olivet, to vindicate His honor and His Godhead amidst terrors and tribulations far transcending those of wasted Sion; when, in the hour of final reckoning, all men will stand before Him in judgment, and give answer for their lives of sin; when He must doom to hell a countless host of souls, His loved souls of men, for whom He would gladly die a thousand deaths, could it avail them. Well may the Master weep!

Even as Christ stood on Mount Olivet, mourning over the city laid waste and desolate, His glance turned to the right, and followed along the Vale of Cedron to where it opened out into Josaphat, the valley where God is Judge,[4] the valley of destruction.[5] There an-

4 Maas, Comm. in Matt. xxv, 31.
5 Joel III, 14.

other vision held His gaze. As Ezechiel[6] of old, did He behold a plain strewn with the bones of men. As far as the eye could reach, these dried and sun-bleached relics of what had once been men, were resting in confused and ghastly heaps. Then, obedient to the breath of the Almighty, there was a movement among the bones, which straightway began to assemble and adjust themselves, each one to its proper joint. Then sinew and muscle in turn found place upon the skeletons, and flesh grew forth, and skin was stretched thereon. And the vivifying spirits, that had long since fled from their earthly tabernacles, were summoned back by the Omnipotent, each to its appointed place. It was the resurrection of the dead.

With the Prophet Joel,[7] Christ beheld all nations thus called back from death, coming to the judgment there in the Valley of Josaphat. He fully realized that it was of Him the prophet spoke when he had said: "There will I sit to judge all nations round about." He knew only too well that His beloved Sion must come that day to hear her sentence. The fearful truth was brought home to Him, that He as Judge must speak against the deicides the word of justice that is to seal their doom for all eternity. Well may the Good Shepherd weep at the destruction of His wayward, yet cherished flock!

There is a tradition current,[8] coming down to

6 Ezech. XXXVII.
7 Joel III.
8 D. Thom. Suppl. q. LXXXVIII. Art. 4.

us from the earliest ages of faith,[9] that the valley of judgment is the one situated beneath the eyes of the weeping Christ, as it sweeps to the northward and the west around the hills that close in the Holy City. What more fitting place for the judgment of mankind than this valley within the shadow of Olivet? Here is Gethsemani with its olive grove. The Garden of Christ's agony and humiliation will thus become no less the scene of His glorious triumph and His honor vindicated. On the very spot where Judas betrayed the Master with a kiss, must that same Judas give answer for his perfidy. Down to the south is Gehenna, the Vale of Hinnom, the valley of the wail of children, where the idolatrous kings of Juda and their countless followers must confront the guileless babes they so ruthlessly destroyed, and stand adjudged by Christ for these His little ones.[10]

Then, too, must the ruins of Jerusalem give up her dead. The proud and sanctimonious Pharisee no less than the scoffing Sadducee; the hypocritical wearer of priestly robes who rent his garments and thought to contradict his God; the obsequious servant who curried favor with his master by striking Him who spoke with divine authority; the officials of the Temple who led forth the band to seize the Nazarene; the godless rabble that spat upon the Sacred Countenance; each member of the Coun-

9 St. Jerome, Comm. in Joel III.
10 Lapide, Comm. in Joel III, 2.

cil that decreed the Saviour's death; every unit of the riotous mob that surged around the judgment-seat of Pilate and filled the air with their loud cries that the Nazarene be crucified. Yes, each and every one of them, with all their grades of guilt, will rise again, and there stand face to face with the victim of their fury and their hate, to give answer for the blood they took upon themselves and on their children.

There, too, will stand adjudged the Roman soldiery that plied the cruel scourge, the human fiends that formed the crown of thorns, the Herodian court that mocked the Saviour as a fool. There, also, will answer for their guilt, the countless host who have at all times and in every clime waged unrelenting war against the Lord and against His Christ.[11] And there, again, must you and I and every other man account to God for the keeping of the temples of our souls.

We may through life bid defiance to God's holy law. We may even flatter ourselves perchance, that we have no need of God. Using God's gifts only to offend Him, we may copy Judas in his perfidy. By the base gratification of our passions, we may bow down and worship the idol of sin. By our evil example, we may scandalize the innocent and consign their souls, not to a roaring furnace of earthly fire, but to the inextinguishable flames of hell. We may through our entire lives carry on the unequal

11 Ps. II, 2.

conflict with the Omnipotent God. We may by unspeakable and degrading crimes crucify our Christ each day anew. We may disregard His oft-repeated warnings. We may shut our souls against the gentle influence of His grace. But, the day will inevitably come, when each and every act must be accounted for, when as an all-wise, all-just judge, Christ will pass verdict on every single soul, when you and I must stand and meet our Saviour face to face and answer for our lives of sinful pleasure.

We gather from the Acts of the Apostles [12] how the Athenians in the time of St. Paul were ready for any novelty in the matter of religious theories. The advent of the Apostle excited their curiosity, and they brought him to the Areopagus, that he might propound his scheme of a new divinity. They did not resent his charge of superstition. They even listened with interest to his reference to their altar dedicated "to the unknown god." They were attentive and appreciative auditors of his exposition of the office of God the Creator. But, at the first reference to the resurrection and the judgment, these carnal-minded men laughed the Apostle to scorn, and gave him a gentle hint that he was treading on dangerous ground. Blinded by the glamor of the passing pageant of worldly pleasures, we ourselves are apt at times to shut our eyes to the fact that this world of ours is destined to pass away. We do not wish to think of

12 Acts xvii, 18-32.

the hour of dissolution of soul and body. Still more reluctant are we to look ahead to the day of retribution, when the voice of the Almighty will summon back that soul and body, to stand before the Christ in judgment.

How shall this be brought about?[13] The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall no longer give her light. The stars shall fade from the heavens.[14] Confusion shall reign throughout the world,[15] men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world.[16] Then shall a mighty conflagration sweep this world of ours,[17] such a cataclysm of nature as will change the entire face of the habitable globe. Every living creature, down to the smallest trailing plant and the tiniest organism that boasts of life, shall shrivel up before the flame. The restless ocean shall fail to protect the denizens of the deep. The fiery breath will search the crevices of the rock and penetrate deep through the surface soil to reach the last thing that can be said to live . The enveloping atmosphere will be no more, and for a time, it will be as if this world of ours had passed, as perhaps in truth it will, through a fiery sun, and issued forth again devoid of life, to resume its pathway among the planets.[18]

After the fiery scourge has done its work, of

13 Mazella, De Deo Creante, Disp. VI, Art. 12.
14 Mark XIII, 24-25.
15 Is. XIII, 6-11.
16 Luke XXI, 25, 26.
17 Ps. XCVI, 3; 2 Peter III, 10-12.
18 Mazella, De Deo Creante, Disp. VI, Art. 12.

all that once had life, no vestige will remain. The animals and plants, the birds of the air and the sightless creatures that now make their tortuous way through the hidden recesses of the earth, were intended in the creative plan of God for the sustenance and solace of mankind. They too participate in the universal death, but none of them will ever rise again, as man will no longer have need of their existence. Out from the ruin of earthly life, man alone will be raised up again. For, in that hour, the angels of God will be despatched to the extremities of the earth, to cry to the dead to come forth in answer to the mandate of their Maker, and to gather together in the valley of destruction to meet their Christ, their judge.

Then will the earth yield up its dead.[19] In each and every hamlet where God's acre lies, the ground will sway, the handful of scattered dust will put on shape of man again, and, reunited to its proper soul, hasten to the Valley of Josaphat. Then too will the angry waves, if waves there yet remain, yield up the prey of centuries, giving back the forms long since engulfed, that they also may pass to judgment. Even hell must relinquish its victims at that hour. But the liberated souls will experience no surcease of agony, as they hurry back to earth to be united again to the partners of sin in life, and then, after receiving judgment, to drag back with them the guilty bodies to the pit

19 Dan. XII, 2; Job XIX, 25, 26.

of hell, that their sufferings may be increased a hundredfold. No human being, entered in the book of the living, can let the angel's summons pass, but at the trumpet's sound, by irresistible force will all be drawn to judgment.

Then will appear in the sky the sign of the Son of Man,[20] a cross, perhaps the cross of Calvary, and the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man Himself coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory and majesty. The words of Eternal Truth have so decreed.[21] Of a sudden, a mighty movement will cause that throng to surge and sway, and as chaff scattered by the onrush of the wind, so will they be swept in an instant, some to one side, and the rest to the other, and the chosen of Christ will be found upon the right, and the children of perdition will be hurled in mad confusion to the left. And straightway, the iniquity of the whole world will be made manifest to all men.

And are we now ready to stand before our Judge, and hear the sentence of innocence or guilt? One mortal sin unconfessed, unatoned at the hour of death, and man's fate is forever sealed!

Is there no escape from this dread judgment? No possible way of averting the fearful calamity that overhangs the sinner? For who is there that has not sinned? Who has not banished from his soul the sanctifying grace that

20 Matt. xxiv, 30. 21 Matt. xxvi, 64.

was infused in holy Baptism? The Scriptures warn us: "There is no man who sinneth not." [22] And it is the Apostle John who confesses: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." [23]

Our Divine Saviour, weeping on Olivet, is a God of mercy, who valued each poor human soul at such a price, that He was ready to shed, not tears alone, but the last drop of His most precious blood, if only He might turn one sinner to repentance. Hence it was, that by a miracle of love, He found a way to satisfy alike His mercy and His justice. All sin must be submitted to judgment. But now Christ, the Son of God, has instituted an early tribunal, that will shield the culprit in the hour of the final accounting. This is the sacrament of Penance, intended to satisfy Christ's mercy, as the last day must satisfy His justice. Nay, more, St. Bonaventure holds that all the sins remitted in confession will never be made manifest even in the day of judgment. To every man, then, is it left to choose between God's mercy and his justice, to seek the pardon of his guilt in time, that he may avert eternal condemnation.

Turn, then, your eyes to Olivet. Behold the weeping Christ. It is not the city's loss He mourns to-day. His tears are for the fallen soul. Let not those tears of Christ be shed in vain.

22 3 Kings VIII, 46; Eccles. VII, 21. 23 1 John I, 8.

DESPAIR OF THE IDOLATER

Prayer

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Almighty God, that we, who, glorying in the most Sacred Heart of Thy beloved Son, devoutly commemorate the singular benefits of His love toward us, may rejoice alike in their action and in their fruit.[24]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book I, Chapter 24
" II, " 12

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24 Prayer of Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER VII

Attempted Compromise

No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
(MATT. VI, 24.)

IN 1789, the States-General, summoned by Louis XVI as a compromise with the people, changed its name to the National Assembly, and through Mirabeau, answered the royal officer who ordered them to cease their sittings: "Go and tell your master, that we sit here by the will of the people, and that we are only to be driven out by the bayonet." [1] It was the King, who was driven out. His effort at compromise cost him his throne and his life.

Michael II, Emperor of Constantinople in 820, refused to recognize Christ as the Messias, and placed Judas in the Calendar of the Saints.[2] Monstrous as seems this action of the Iconoclast Emperor, it offers a fair suggestion for the hypocrites of all ages, who seek to compromise with Christ, and exercise a dual service in the sanctuary of the soul. Let them be hon-

1 Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. IV, p. 527.
2 Ibid., II, p. 446.

est with themselves at least, and choose Judas as their patron, for the life and tragic end of the Iscariot may be regarded as the very personification of compromise.

While the Gospel story refers to the betrayer only here and there, and tradition itself throws little light on the details of his blighted life, in the spirit of the Exercises, whereby we enter into each contemplation as if actually on the scene ourselves, and fill in details as reason and devotion require, we may study the development of Judas' character, from the early days of innocence, through the years of conflict, watching the struggle between sin and grace. It will be our purpose, then, following the chronology of the life of Christ, to picture to ourselves the probable influence of passing events on the soul of the Iscariot.

The miracles and cures that marked the opening of Our Lord's public life drew to Him great crowds, who followed Him, even with great fatigue. Of the number, was a young man from Carioth, a certain Judas, the son of Simon. He was a youth of blameless character, exact in matters of the law; he gave great promise as a man of affairs, and was withal an upright though ambitious soul. Expectant of the Messias, he had attached himself closely to the Master, not without a cherished hope, however, that if He were really the Promised One, as an early and ardent disciple, he might himself reap richly of the fruits of the Kingdom.

This was his first compromise. He would follow Christ, but incidentally seek his own temporal gain.

When Judas was selected as an apostle, Our Lord was not deceived by external exactness. He would give the vacillating soul an equal chance with the others, and on the very day of the choice, He uttered the warning cry: "You cannot serve God and mammon." [3]

The succeeding days must have been restless ones for Judas. He marveled at the cure of the Centurion's servant.[4] He listened eagerly to the embassy from John, with the Master's confirmation of His Messianic claims.[5] He may have deprecated the Master's forbearance with the Magdalen,[6] and even doubted, perhaps, the literal meaning of the words of pardon. It behooved him to hold his peace. He does not speak openly, but harbors disloyal thoughts.

The calming of the storm at sea,[7] and the submission of the demoniac at Geraza,[8] showed the Master's power over the elements and the infernal legions. He was not present at the raising of Jairus' daughter, but Peter and the sons of Zebedee told him all the details. He did well to hold his peace.

In the mission of the Twelve, [9] Judas shared the power to heal diseases and cast out devils. Great is his joy and exultation at the return to Capharnaum, when he tells the Master of the

3 Matt. VI, 24.
4 Luke VII, 1-10.
5 Luke VII, 18-23.
6 Luke VII, 36-53.
7 Mark IV, 35-40.
8 Mark V, 1-20.
9 Mark VI, 7-13.

wonders he has wrought in His name.[10] His cherished dreams are being fulfilled. His ambitious soul, then, finds it hard to withdraw from success and popular acclaim, when the Master bids the apostles "to come apart into a desert place and rest a little." [11]

The Iscariot's ambition reached a climax when the multitude was miraculously fed on five loaves and two fishes.[12] His heart swelled high with hope when he heard the acclamation that would make the Master king.[13] Possibly he had much to do with the raising of the cry. He confidently awaited the Master's acceptance, to take his place at the right hand of the Deliverer of Israel. A skilful financier, he had deservedly been made the treasurer of the Apostolic College. True, he had, from time to time, pilfered from the common purse,[14] but the simple fishermen about him knew nothing of the thefts. In his new position, he would be greater than a Roman Governor. He would be the Controller of the nation's finance. Through his hands must flow a countless treasure. For, must not all nations bow down and pay tribute to the Messias? [15] What if a little of the gold clung to his fingers. No one would be the wiser. Compromise! Compromise, again!

The imperative order of the Master, for His reluctant disciples to take ship to Bethsaida,[16]

10 Mark VI, 30.
11 Mark VI, 31.
12 John VI, 2-12.
13 John VI, 14, 15.
14 John XII, 6.
15 Deut. XX, 11.
16 Mark VI, 45.

may have shattered such a train of thought; and the storm that threatened to wreck the little craft, until the Master came walking upon the waters,[17] was nothing in comparison with the tempest that must have been raging in Judas' soul. He may have regarded Christ's rejection of the crown as cowardice. He felt aggrieved that his own well-laid plans and schemes had been nullified. Perhaps his two years of faithful service and sacrifice were to go for nothing. This might be an impostor, after all. The Doctors of the Law had said that this Nazarene was only the agent of the prince of darkness.[18] It behooved him to be more guarded hereafter. The compromise is gaining ground.

A soul in such a turmoil was little ready on the morrow for the promise of the Eucharistic Bread. The cry of the multitude ,"This saying is hard; and who can hear it," [19] found its echo in Judas' heart, until the free, deliberate act of unbelief, "I do not believe," drove grace from out the life of Judas, and definitely enshrined Satan in God's own temple of his soul. Compromise had scored a triumph, and compromise henceforth made rapid headway.

The Master was fully cognizant of Judas' sad condition. For, when the multitude dwindled away under pretense of being scandalized, and Peter met the query of the Christ with the marvelous protestation of love and faith in be-

17 Mark VI, 47-51. 18 Mark III, 22. 19 John VI, 61.

half of the Twelve, "Jesus answered them: Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil," and as the narrator John takes care to add: "Now he meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon; for this same was about to betray him, whereas he was one of the twelve." [20]

The Jewish Council had long since passed sentence of public banishment from Judea against the Master, for healing the man at the pool Probatica on a Sabbath.[21] Death was to be the penalty if He returned. Judas now watched with interest the frequent efforts of the Sanhedrin to entrap the Master. The thought, at first repelled with horror, of winning by treachery what friendship denied, gradually gained an entrance to his mind. The little seed once sown found fertile soil and flourished. Nourished for a time as a mere theoretical possibility to satisfy his vanity, it gradually took form, and every minutest detail was perfectly adjusted. It would be so easy for him to deliver up the Master!

Christ's prediction of His approaching death,[22] the preference shown at times for Peter and James and John,[23] the conditions established for fellowship with Christ,[24] and the homeless wanderings, all gnawed like a canker in the traitor's heart. The raising of Lazarus[25]

20 John VI, 71, 72.
21 Gigot, Outlines of New Test. Hist. X, no. 1.
22 Luke IX, 22.
23 Luke IX, 28.
24 Luke IX, 57-62.
25 John XI, 17-44.

for a time held him in restraint. He heard of the Sanhedrin's new decree, "that one man should die for the people." [26] It would, indeed, be easy to carry the cherished project into execution! But the plan was again abandoned when he heard the promise, that the Twelve should occupy twelve seats judging the Tribes of Israel.[27]

The ambition of the sons of Zebedee[28] again aroused the evil spirit within him, and when he saw the Magdalen pouring on the Master's feet an ointment that might have enriched his purse,[29] his ill-humor could no longer be concealed. For the first time he murmured openly. The Master chided him. His pride was hurt. The die was cast. Let the Master now look to it!

On Wednesday of Passover Week, the Jewish Council met to devise means of compassing the Nazarene's death. The multitude of His followers bid fair to thwart their plans, until Judas came to their assistance. He would deliver the Master for a price.[30] After much haggling, an agreement was reached on thirty pieces of silver, the price stipulated by law, to be paid in atonement for a murdered slave.[31] The compromise is now complete. It only remains to carry out the contract.

As our Divine Saviour knelt to wash His apostles' feet at the Last Supper,[32] lovingly He lingered at the feet of His betrayer, vainly try-

26 John XI, 50.
27 Matt. XIX, 28.
28 Mark X, 35-40.
29 John XII, 1-8.
30 Luke XXII, 2-6.
31 Exod. XXI, 32.
32 John XIII, 2-5.

ing to cancel the unholy pact. Judas' heart was closed to the whisperings of grace.[33] The bond was sealed. There was no withdrawing from the contract now. A life of compromise had found its natural conclusion in a total surrender to the foe, to whom the first concession had been made by way of compromise.

Christ's final words of warning disturbed Judas, but moved him not from his purpose. He heeded only the command, "That which thou dost, do quickly." [34] And going out, the darkness of night took possession of his soul.[35]

Carried away by passion, the traitor did not fully appreciate the enormity of his crime, until events had passed beyond his control. Then, remorse and anguish of spirit turned to deepest despair. The midnight hour in that man's soul had sounded. With a cry of horror, he cast the price of blood down in the Temple,[36] and fled out of the city. The Abbé Fouard thus conceives his flight: "On quitting the Temple, he took the road which descends toward the Fountain of Siloe. At the spot where Cedron joins Brook-Hinnom, he started up the somber recesses of the latter, whose aspect was not of a nature to soothe his despairing soul. Even to-day, Jerusalem has no chillier nor gloomier region—a deep narrow gorge, with beetling cliffs of jagged rocks, overshadowed here and there with dark olive-trees, while still in this

33 Matt. xxvi, 21-24.
34 John xiii, 27.
35 John xiii, 30.
36 Matt. xxvii, 3-5.

deep ravine, long ago cursed by Jeremias, the memory of those sacrifices to Moloch seems always to rise uppermost in one's mind. Judas made his way up the acclivity which rises opposite Mount Sion, and came to a halt in a clay field belonging to a potter thereabouts. From this point his eye could sweep the whole pathway along which he had last night dragged his Victim, from Gethsemani to the Pontiff's palace; and as he gazed, his mind altogether gave way under the burthen of mad despair. Then, says St. Matthew, 'he went and hanged himself'; and in the Acts it is added that, 'the rope broke'; his body falling headlong to the earth, burst asunder, and his bowels were spilled over the Field of Blood." [37]

Father Meschler thus sums up the traitor's end. "It was the condemnation of Jesus by the Great Council and His being led away to Pilate,[38] which brought Judas to repentance. He now saw with his own eyes the terrible consequences of his treachery, and began to repent of his deed.

"As regards the nature of his contrition and penance, it seems to have been perfect in many respects—at all events exteriorly. He recognizes the infamy and horror of his crime, and repents of it. He openly confesses it before the chief priests and ancients, who had perhaps remained behind in the house of Caiphas to

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37 Fouard, Christ the Son of God, II, pp. 288-290.
38 Matt. XXVII, 3.

transact other business, or had gone into the Temple.[39] He testifies in their presence to the innocence of Jesus, as opposed to the verdict of 'guilty' which they had pronounced upon Him, and acknowledges his own guilt, saying that he has betrayed innocent blood and thereby sinned.[40] Lastly, he tears himself away from his idol, the money that had seduced him to sin, and casts it down in the Temple.[41] What, then, was wanting to his contrition and penance? It was the important—nay, essential—virtues of hope, confidence, and love. He saw only the magnitude and dreadfulness of his offence, and not the possibility of pardon, and so he despaired, as Cain had once done.[42] His sorrow was therefore not a sorrow unto life, but unto death.[43]

"And how was this? Some are of opinion that Judas had thought our Saviour would certainly not be killed, but would contrive to escape from the hands of his enemies, as He had so often done before; but this expectation had not been fulfilled, and so he was the first to be guilty of the blood of Our Lord. And therefore he despaired. But even apart from this, the whole course of what passed in his soul is very natural. At first, blinded by passion and tempted by the devil, he had only seen in the deed the enticing prospect of gain, and now it was accomplished he saw only the horror of

39 Matt. xxvii, 3. 41 Matt. xxvii, 5. 43 2 Cor. vii, 9 seq.
40 Matt. xxvii, 4. 42 Gen. iv, 13.

it. A complete reaction set in, and so now he could not even endure to keep the money that had had such an attraction for him before. Such is the natural interior course of every sin, and in this case his own fickle, unstable character together with the influence of the devil contributed to bring it about.

"After Judas had cast the pieces of silver into the Temple he fled, driven by despair and the Evil One, out of the city to the vale of Hinnom. What a terrified glance would he not cast at the Mount of Olives, at the foot of which the Garden of Gethsemani lies! Would he not think of those words of Our Saviour's: 'Friend, whereto art thou come?' and 'It were better for him, if that man had not been born!' Did he not think too of Absolom, who expired hanging on a tree? Did not the Evil One shout into his ears the terrible execrations and curses that the prophet (as it appears, with reference to him) had foretold: 'They repaid Me evil for good, and hatred for My love. . . . May the devil stand at his right hand. When he is judged, may he go out condemned; and may his prayer be turned to sin. . . . May there be none to help him. . . . He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him. . . . It went in like water into his entrails, and like oil into his bones. . . . May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually.' [44] Overpowered

[44] Ps. CVIII, 4 seq.

by remorse of conscience and despair, the unhappy wretch hanged himself. The body burst asunder in the midst and fell to the ground.[45]

"What an example, and what a terrible lesson! An apostle ends his days as a suicide —the impeacher and avenger of his own crime! What more is needed to teach us how fatal it is not to resist our evil passions? Is not every passion a very Satan, that can make us miserable for time and eternity? But still even passion and its bitter fruit, sin, could not have compassed his ruin if only he had not lost confidence and despaired. Peter had fallen, too. But he seized the saving hand of Jesus by his love and trust. How very differently Judas would have been received by Peter, John, and Mary, if he had fled to them in his contrition and cast himself into their arms, instead of going to the chief priests! How great is the evil of losing confidence and falling into despair!" [46]

* * *

PRAYER

O God, from whom Judas received the punishment of his sins, and the thief the reward of his confession; grant us the effects of Thy mercy; that as our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His Passion bestowed on each a different recompense of His merits, so having destroyed the old man in us, He may give us the grace of His resurrection.[47]

45 Acts I, 18.
46 Meschler, Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, II, pp. 417-420.
47 Collect of Mass on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

NOTE:—For a Religious, the downward steps of Judas echo as a death-knell in the soul. Briefly we may outline a lost vocation, following the Iscariot. The decline may be measured by fourteen paces:

1 Self-complacence.
2 Jealousy, especially at the preferment of others.
3 Mental criticism.
4 Infringements of obedience.
5 Infringements of poverty, at first on supposed permissions.
6 Suspicions of others.
7 Neglect of prayer.
8 Rash judgments against superiors.
9 Mental rebellion.
10 Open criticism.
11 Sowing of discord.
12 Open disobedience.
13 Resenting correction.
14 Wounded pride.

CONSEQUENCE—Casting off the habit.

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book I, Chapter 20
" III, " 11

CHAPTER VIII

The Temple Resanctified

I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist; return to me, for I have redeemed thee. (Is. XLIV, 22.)

AT THE close of a sanguinary campaign, two Emperors placed their war steeds side by side, and the victorious troops marched before them in review. As the serried ranks swept proudly past, there stood close by the Emperors a hussar of gigantic size. But it was not so much the breadth of shoulders, nor the well-knit frame that attracted attention, as the fierce, determined look that was stamped on a face that was one mass of scars. The conquering Emperor turned to the vanquished at his side, and pointing out the war-scarred veteran, with a flush of pride exclaimed: "What think you of a soldier such as this?" To which, there came the quick retort: "What think you of soldiers who could leave those scars?" And in the pause that followed, both Emperors heard the veteran mutter to himself: "They are all dead." Each and every hand that had left its mark on that fierce-countenanced hussar, had straightway been relaxed in death. Each and every foeman

who had proved the mettle of this warrior, had been pursued across the battlefield until he paid the penalty of his rashness. Well might the veteran proudly exclaim: "They are all dead." Not one remained to boast or point the finger of scorn in the hour of victory. They were indeed all dead. Such scars were then in truth no longer cause for shame. On the day of triumph they had become glorious records of victories well won.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius, a Jew from Palestine made his appearance in the eternal city, and attracted much attention in the Ghetto. He was a man of middle years, tall and upright. His pale countenance was marked by deep furrows, concealed in part by the frizzled beard. His black eyes, sunken beneath the protuberant brows, were seldom seen by men, so constantly were they cast down. But those who knew him well, bore testimony to the fact that the eyes were blood-stained from constant weeping. The sneering Roman might tell you that it was Peter, the Galilean, the head of a new sect among the Jews. A strange fanatic, who rose each night, when the cock began to crow, and wept for some transgression, until the burning tears had worn those furrows in his cheeks. Truly, were those furrows Peter's scars of honor! Even as Judas had he compromised with sin. Even as Judas, had he betrayed the gate. Even as Judas, had he desecrated the temple of the

soul. But, unlike Judas, he had pursued that sin to death. Unlike Judas, he had won back the gate. Unlike Judas, he had purified the temple. And now he bore the scars of conflict as undying proofs of victory.

At the last grand review, when the nations of this earth must needs witness the triumph of Justice and Truth, and bestow their plaudits on the victorious hosts, proudly may scars be borne, if one may say of all the sins and passions that caused those ugly marks during the battle of life: "They are all dead." Each and every one in turn was followed to its death. Each compromise and every moment of weakness has been atoned for. They are all dead.

Since with Peter, we have denied the Master and betrayed the gate, with Peter let us learn how to turn defeat into victory, and convert those gaping wounds of soul, that sap away our strength, into the scars of honor, that we may bear them without fear or shame for all eternity, as evidence of hard-won victories.

There were three main causes of Peter's compromise. Excessive self-reliance, neglect of prayer and rashness in remaining in the occasion of sin. And the selfsame influences effect most of the sinful compromises to-day.

One critic well remarks: "It was the night of his first communion; we must not forget that. His feet had been washed by the Master's own hands; he had received the body and blood of

his Lord; he had listened to the beautiful farewell discourse of Jesus, which St. John has recorded for us at such length; his heart was all aglow with ardent love. Deny his Lord! Deny Him thrice! And on that night of all others! Impossible! Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Though all should be scandalized in Thee, yet not I. But Jesus knew him far better than he knew himself; and the sad prediction was most sadly fulfilled—fulfilled to the letter: Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." [1]

The trial of Our Saviour was in session in a room overlooking the court, and as the cock crew for the second time, the Master was led by an open window, whence turning He gazed down on the apostle who was swearing that he knew Him not. Oh, the tender pity of that look! No reproach, only love and earnest pleading, striving to draw His loved one from his sin. That single look sufficed. The oath died on Peter's lips. Hot tears of penitence blinded his sight. Overwhelmed with grief and remorse, he fled from the occasions of sin, and hastened out into the night.

The Evangelists are silent regarding the path that Peter followed, but in keeping with the general gospel story, we may picture his wandering aimlessly for a time about the dark, deserted streets and city alleys. Finally, finding his way to the open country beyond the

[1] Lucas, In the Morning of Life, p. 44.

Eastern Gate, we may imagine him gazing down on the Valley of the Cedron.

Unconsciously, the sorrowing, heart-broken Peter follows the very path the Iscariot trod one brief hour ago. He too hears the mocking laugh of demons, as he hastens by Gethsemani. He too turns into the Vale of Hinnom, and beholds in fancy the burning babes of bygone days. He too is battling with Satan, who strives with fiendish might to shroud another apostle's soul in the midnight of despair. Yet, while he sinks upon the ground, bowed down with grief and bitter anguish of heart, repentance and true contrition win the victory.

Peter's whole life passes in panorama before him. If he could only turn back the flowing sands of time! He lives again the thoughtless, happy days of childhood by the Sea of Galilee. Why did not his God and Maker call him in his innocence! He hears again the Master's invitation to come and follow Him.[2] He treads again the hills of Galilee at that same Master's side. He witnesses once more the Master's gentleness in winning back poor erring souls. If he could only meet the Master now, and beg forgiveness at the Master's feet!

How well he remembers the day when he was walking in the courts of the Temple with the Master and the chosen band of followers. As they enter one of the rooms opening off the porch,[3] a party of scribes and Pharisees

2 Matt. IV, 19.

3 John VIII, 1-11.

drag in a wretched creature with disheveled hair, her ragged garments clinging to her emaciated form in tattered shreds. This is not a lady fallen from her high estate, but one of the denizens from the city slums. "Here is a woman," they cry, "whom even now we have taken in sin. By the law she should die. But what sayest Thou, Master?" They would force Him to pass judgment on that shapeless mass of rags, humbled at His feet and weeping hysterically. Christ reads the secrets of their fiendish hearts, that seek to trap Him. He is fully conscious of the blind hate that would gladly sacrifice this unfortunate creature, if thereby they may destroy His reputation for mercy. But He also knows the secret of another heart, a broken, sorrow-stricken, repentant heart, crushed by sin, but yearning, sighing, pleading for the return of grace. He has the full knowledge, too, of the meaning of those hot tears with which His feet are bedewed. He understands no less the convulsive sobs of penitence, the trembling hands that cling to Him with new-found hope. It is indeed the law, that such a woman should die the death, but it is no less the law, that he, by whom the first stone is cast, must himself be free from sin.

The Master reminds the accusers of this condition of the law, as stooping down, He begins to trace characters upon the sanded floor. All watch Him, at first with curiosity, and then with intense interest. He is setting down a

heinous crime far outweighing that poor woman's life of sin. The leader of the Pharisees suddenly clasps his hands before his eyes, and with a cry of shame hurries from the room. He has seen the secret of his soul laid bare before him. He, at least, is not free to cast the stone. The hand of Christ obliterates the writing in the sand, and begins anew. Another tale of crime and iniquity, and another proud Pharisee slinks away to hide his shame. Another accuser, and another, take their departure, each one having seen his hidden sins made manifest. Not one of them may cast a stone. And when the last has slipped away, turning to the poor wretch who already owes her bodily safety to His generosity and protection, in order to bring back grace and strength to the crushed and sinful soul, He asks with infinite tenderness: "Woman, hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."

How Peter's heart had gone out to the Master in that hour! If he could only cast himself at those sacred feet and in his turn water them with the hot tears of penitence and remorse! But where is the Master? How is he to find the Master? The loving, all-forgiving Master, whom he had denied! He must find the Master! He will find the Master!

Throughout the night, Peter had sat there bowed in sorrow, all unconscious of the fleeting

hours. He had not noticed the return of day. Much less had he observed, that while the sun was still high in the zenith, weird ghost-like shadows were gradually veiling its light. As he stumbled to his feet, however, he suddenly realized that while it was yet but little past midday, the sun was becoming darkened, and a wall of gloom was shutting out the city from his view.

If in distant Egypt,[4] Dionysius the Areopagite marveled at that obscuring of the sun, and rightly reasoned that either God was suffering and the world was sympathizing with Him, or else the world itself was hurrying to destruction,[5] Peter, all conscious of the events of the last few days, and recalling too, that when the children's voices should be silenced, nature itself must cry out in testimony of the Christ,[6] knew only too well the fearful meaning of this conversion of day into night.

While it seems clear from the Gospel story that Peter was not numbered among the little group that gathered around the cross on Calvary, it is in keeping with the apostle's generous impulsive love for the Master to suppose that in his penitence he must have found his way at least to the foot of the hill of shame. In this spirit, then, let us follow him back to the city as he gropes his way. The crowds are

4 Maas, Life of Christ, p. 541.
5 Dionysius the Areopagite, Epist. VII.
6 Luke XIX, 40.

flocking westward from the Temple. Through the throng he stumbles along as fast as the gathering darkness will permit. At length, he reaches the hill called Golgotha. Three crosses crown its summit, and stand out dim against the wall of gloom beyond. On the central one, disfigured beyond all human recognition, through instinct of love, Peter at once recognizes the Master, the dying Christ.

As the publican in the parable, he sinks down afar off, sobbing forth the simple prayer: "O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" And even as he gazes, the eyes of the dying Saviour rest tenderly upon him, and heal the wounds of sin, leaving only the scars of honor. "I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist; return to me, for I have redeemed thee."

A mighty tremor convulses the earth. A nation's crime has been consummated. Cast on his face by the violence of the shock, Peter quickly raises his eyes again. The thorn-crowned head has sunk upon the breast. The form upon that central cross is still. The Master has died, that he, poor faithless Peter, may live again to grace.

The very eyes that pardoned Peter from the cross gaze down upon us as we kneel before our Eucharistic Lord, the self-same Christ of Golgotha. Look up with confidence, poor sin-burdened soul! Behold the ransom of your sins. Draw near before the gathering shadows

of despair shut out the cross from view. Sink down by Peter's side, and make your peace with Christ.

* * *

PRAYER

O God, who dost choose rather to have pity on them that hope in Thee than to be angry, grant us to weep, as becomes us, for the evils we have done, that we may deserve to find the favor of Thy consolation.[7]

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book III, Chapter 30
" III, " 52

7 Prayer over the People: Mass, Saturday in 4th Week of Lent.

CHAPTER IX

The High Priest

I will not leave you orphans.
(JOHN XIV, 18.)

WE READ in the Book of Leviticus, how Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests of the Most High.[1] When the first sacrifice had been prepared, God gave from heaven sacred fire to consume it: "And, behold, a fire, coming forth from the Lord, devoured the holocaust." [2]

This fire was thereafter preserved, and from it all fires for the purposes of the Sanctuary had to be taken, for the Lord had commanded: "And the fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning, and laying on the holocaust, shall burn thereof the fat of the peace offerings. This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar." [3]

It is further recorded, how God slew by fire Nadab and Abiu for using profane fire in the censers: "And Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, taking their censers, put fire therein, and incense on it, offering before the Lord

1 Levit. VIII, 1-16.
2 Levit. IX, 24.
3 Levit. VI, 12, 13.

strange fire: which was not commanded them, and fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord." [4]

At the time of the Babylonian exile, the priests hid this sacred fire in a deep and waterless pit, lest it should be extinguished and profaned, believing that in due time the fire would be restored to them. "For when our fathers were led into Persia, the priests that then were worshipers of God, took privately the fire from the altar, and hid it in a valley where there was a deep pit without water, and there they kept it safe, so that the place was unknown to all men." [5]

After many years, the priest Nehemias sought again the sacred fire. The pit was found no longer dry but full of water. At the priest's bidding, the sacrifice already laid upon the wood was sprinkled with this water, and once again fire sprang forth and consumed the holocaust. "But, when many years had passed, and it pleased God that Nehemias should be sent by the king of Persia, he sent some of the posterity of those priests that had hid it, to seek for the fire: and as they told us, they found no fire, but thick water. Then he bade them draw it up and bring it to him: and the priest Nehemias commanded the sacrifices that were laid on to be sprinkled with the same water, both the wood, and the things that were laid upon it. And when this was done, and the

[4] Levit. x, 1, 2.

[5] 2 Mac. i, 19.

time came that the sun shone out, which before was in a cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that all wondered." [6]

When the Divine Architect had fashioned the human soul as the living temple of the Holy Ghost, He consecrated man a holy priesthood to guard and serve the chosen sanctuary, wherein He placed as sacred fire the Love Divine, that was to enkindle and make holy every act of sacrifice, every prayerful offering.

But when the human race entered on the exile of sin, the sacred fire was snatched from the sanctuary and concealed for centuries, until brought to light again on Calvary. Numberless sacrifices had been offered on the sacred Mount of Sion and countless prayers had ascended as sweet incense to the Most High, to win back the priceless treasure that had been lost. The cause of exile had to be atoned for before the gates of heaven, closed and sealed by sin, could once again be flung wide open, that this sacred fire might burst forth afresh. It was found again at length amid the humiliations and sufferings of Golgotha, and consumed the vicarious Victim for sin. It is enkindled each day anew on countless altars, in every clime, and spreads in holy conflagration to the generous hearts without number, who gather as witnesses about Calvary's Holy Sacrifice once more renewed.

Standing on the shore of the North Sea,

[6] *2 Mac. I, 20-22.*

and gazing out over the restless ocean, the mighty Charlemagne wept at the sight of the piratical Northmen, hovering in the distance. On being asked the reason of his sorrow, he made answer: "Alas; if these men are so audaciously aggressive in my own lifetime, what will not my people have to suffer, when I am no more!" [7]

Our Divine Saviour, standing at the Last Supper, gazing down over the stormy sea of life, and reading the secrets of hearts, might well be saddened at the inroads Satan is making even into the chosen Twelve about Him. Judas has already turned traitor. Peter, within a few brief hours, will under oath disclaim even an acquaintance with the Master. These chosen temples for whose adornment He has labored and toiled during the three years of public life, are falling easy spoil before the attack of the arch-enemy He has come to crush. Then by an outburst of all-consuming love, by a miracle of tenderness, He finds a way whereby He may die to sanctify His temples, and yet remain to guard and protect His loved ones. Hence it is, that He turns to those about Him, and in place of bewailing the day when He shall be with them no more, He comforts their sad and troubled hearts with the touching promise: "I will not leave you orphans."

In that hour, He fully realized what the choice would cost Him. He appreciated in

[7] Alzog, Univ. Ch. Hist. II, no. 174.

minutest detail what it would mean to institute the Holy Eucharist, whereby to the end of time He might each day on countless altars throughout the world, die anew to repress the power of the evil one, to strengthen and console His loved ones, to win for us the strength to *Keep the Gate.* He was not blind to the price that He must pay if He is to remain the abiding High Priest in the temples that He has chosen.

He would not leave us orphans! He has not left us orphans! And this, despite the fact that He foresaw how little we would appreciate His priceless gift. He died for us on Calvary, that the sanctuary of our soul might be made holy. He offers up each day upon the altar that same sacrifice of the cross, that the sanctity of our souls may be preserved, that we, in fine, may *Keep the Gate.*

During the siege of Ancona by the army of Frederick Barbarossa, in 1171, a widowed mother watched her two sons nobly fighting upon the ramparts for a whole day without tasting food, such was the famine in the city. And the mother's heart was filled with pride at the prowess of her boys. But when the evening's shadows fell, the mother's pride was turned to anguish. She saw her boys sink down overcome by hunger and fatigue, and no longer able to wield the sword. Going forth under the darkness of night, she gathered in the fields a few bitter herbs, and then in the secrecy of her dwelling, opened a vein in her

arm, and sweetened the herbs with her own life blood. The pottage, she carried to her famished sons, who, strengthened by their mother's sacrifice, were able on the morrow to carry on the battle even to the hour of victory.[8]

During the battle of life, our Divine Saviour, with more than a mother's love, sweetens with His precious blood each day that we communicate, those bitter herbs of life's sorrows and disappointments, for the strength and nourishment of our poor famished souls. Man's life on earth must be a warfare. The world, the flesh and the devil hourly assail him. As heir to all the consequences of Adam's fall, he finds in this world of sin daily assaults against the gate that he has been set to keep. His poor soul becomes faint and weary in the struggle, and amid the shadows of desolation he must sink down despondent with abandoned hope, unless he is fortified and strengthened by the blood of Christ.

What would be said of those two youths on the battlements of Ancona if they had spurned their mother's sacrifice, if they had turned from the pottage in disgust, protesting that they would not taste their mother's blood, that they would rather die upon the city's wall than avail themselves of the strength thus offered them! What must we think of the self-reliant foolhardy soul, that seeks to carry on the battle

[8] Darras, Hist. Cath. Ch. III, p. 279.

of life alone, unstrengthened by the blood of Calvary!

It is to the poor, the simple of heart, that God has taught true wisdom. It is among the lowly ones that we find real love, real devotion, real appreciation in regard to the Sacrament Divine. Father Russell describes for us an example of a simple, kindly soul who had learned to sweeten with the blood of Christ the bitter herbs that must be the daily nourishment of her soul, who had also learned to keep her eye fixed on the "White-man's Star" and to turn to the Tabernacle for guidance as well as for comfort and consolation. Listen to his words. "It is a dark autumn evening, and a student for the priesthood is kneeling in an alcove at the side of the sanctuary in an Irish church. From where he kneels he can see into the body of the dimly-lit, poor little building, himself remaining unseen. An old, old woman whose life of sorrow and of poverty he knows, is alone before the Blessed Sacrament—or so she deems herself to be. She is making her adieux for the night to her sole Friend whom death and the emigrant ship have left her. A slow and painful genuflection, a slow and reluctant turning of the bowed back upon Him whom she loves, and then she turns again smiling, and holds out her withered hands to the Tabernacle. 'Good-night,' she says aloud, 'Good-night, Mavourneen.'" [9] Surely, that

[9] John Hannon, quoted by Fr. Russell, He Is Calling Me, p. 118.

poor creature had learned with childlike faith to *Keep the Gate* with Christ!

During the Spanish-American War, on the arrival of the first wounded from Cuba, a young man, whose father, a captain in the Regular Army, had been killed at Santiago, went through the hospitals, seeking details of his father's death. At length he found among the wounded a sergeant who had belonged to the captain's company. He was sitting on a bench, reading a paper. He must have once been a handsome, stalwart fellow, but was now a wreck of his former self. One arm was in a sling, his foot was shattered and his head and shoulder bandaged. He had been exhausted by loss of blood, and consumed by Cuban fever. As a soldier of the Regular Army, he despised the idle sight-seers and ignored their questions.

Being asked if he was Sergeant X., he merely nodded his reply. Had he known Captain D.? Another nod, and that was all. The young man was standing before the one who could have told him of his father's dying moments, but the lips seemed sealed. A sob came in his voice, as he exclaimed: "I was the captain's son." Straightway, the poor wounded soldier dragged himself to an erect position, resting the bandaged foot upon the bench, saluted his captain's son, and then stood at attention for nearly an hour, nor could any persuasion induce him to sit down again until the interview was over. A flush of shame and remorse suffused

the honest face. He had offended his captain's son.

He had loved his captain with an earnest noble love. The last words of that captain had been an order to himself, just as the fatal bullet reached its mark. Wounded himself shortly afterward, he had crawled back and watched by his captain's lifeless form, until the carriers came to bear it to the rear. Then, on the morrow, out from the hospital, the faithful sergeant, despite his wounds, had crept on hands and knees to mark the grave where his captain had been laid to rest. And the little board he raised that day to mark the spot, in time was destined to prove the means whereby the captain's friends identified the grave.

Now he had offended his captain's son. He had unwittingly insulted his captain's memory. As he stood there at attention, his frame quivering at times with pain, the eyes filled with tears while he rehearsed the story.

When we stand before God's holy altar, we are not in the presence of our Captain's son, but in the very presence of our Captain Himself, the King of kings, our Eucharistic Lord, who died, not fighting at our side in a common cause, but in our stead, in our behalf. Do we show the reverence and love that the wounded sergeant showed his captain's son?

But let us for the time suppose, that during the Cuban campaign our sergeant had proved faithless to the cause in which he had enlisted,

and had justly been sentenced to the traitor's death, and that by some means or other, his captain had secured his pardon by taking on himself the penalty of death. And what if the sergeant had been one of those that were detailed to carry into execution the mandate of the court, and, mastered by some superhuman power, had gazed along the barrel of his piece, and knew only too well that his bullet had reached the mark? His captain was dead for love of him and at his hands, that he might live and redeem his name! How then the recollection of his captain would have sustained him during the weary watches of the night, and aroused his courage in the midst of conflict! How he would have invoked the captain's aid in prayer in every hour of danger, and blessed his memory in the day of triumph!

What is impossible to human affection, has been accomplished by Love Divine. Christ, our Leader and King, has died to free us from the death-penalty of our infidelity; and it is our sins, that have compassed His passion and his death. Nor satisfied with this, by a mystery of love, has He remained a prisoner for all time, the Prisoner of the Tabernacle, that having afforded us the opportunity of redeeming our fair name. He may help and aid us, day by day, to *Keep the Gate,* not merely as a sacred memory, but in person, sustaining and strengthening us, if we but seek His aid and take Him as the Companion of our watches.

During the disastrous retreat from Moscow, one bitter cold night, the guard of Napoleon saw their leader sink down in the snow, buried in grief, all unconscious of the danger he was in of freezing to death. A soldier stepped forward, and spread his great military cloak over the prostrate form of the Emperor. Another followed the example, and another. In the morning, the Emperor awoke. His life had been saved by his guards' sacrifice. The guards were at their posts—frozen corpses. In the course of our daily struggle with sin, it is not the guard who bravely dies, but Christ, our King of kings, gives His own life, that we, poor, sleeping sentinels, may live.

We read in the annals of the Church in Japan, how a certain missionary was being burned at the stake. A child of six had won his fatherly heart, and even as the flames swathed his body, he saw standing close by, awaiting execution, the parents of the boy he loved. The boy he saw not, and his heart was filled with sadness, for he feared that they had taken away the child, to lead him back to paganism. Unmindful of his own torments, he cried aloud: "Where is my little Ignatius?" Hearing the Father's voice, the little fellow came running forward from the crowd, the glad cry upon his lips: "Here I am, Father!" Then, kneeling down close by the flames, his little hands clasped in prayer, he watched unmoved the slaying of his parents and his

friends, and then bowed down his head to the sword of the executioner, welcoming the stroke that was to win for him the martyr's crown, and companionship with his loved Father in heaven.

When the mob of sin and the demons surge round about the soul, pause for an instant, and you will hear the voice of your Eucharistic Master, the High Priest of your soul, crying to you in anxious accents of love: "Where is my little Ignatius? Where is the Alan boy I set to guard the gate?" Then rise up. Hasten through the very midst of the temptation and discouragement. Follow the voice, and it will lead you to the tabernacle. Then on your knees, cry out: "Here I am, Master! The gate is safe. Help me to *Keep the Gate!*"

It was the example of the dying missionary that won for little Ignatius the courage to claim the martyr's crown. It is the example of our dying Saviour, present on the altar, that will strengthen us in the hour of danger. The nearer we draw to Him, the High Priest of our temple, the greater will be our courage. Truly, with Christ, and with Christ alone, the gate is safe.

* * *

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ Son of the Living God, who, according to the will of the Father, through the coöperation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world; deliver me by this Thy most sacred body and blood from all iniquities, and from every evil. Make me always cleave to Thy commandments and never suffer me to be separated from Thee, who with the same God the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.[10] Help me, O Lord, to *Keep the Gate.*

Additional Reading:—

Kempis, *Following of Christ;*
Book IV, Chapter 8
" IV, " 9
" IV, " 13

10 Second Prayer after the Agnus Dei, Ordinary of the Mass.

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